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*Subjectivity and the Representation of Sensory Experience in Apollinaire's Lettres à Madeleine*

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**Sensing the Self: Subjectivity and the Representation of Sensory Experience**  
**in Apollinaire's *Lettres à Madeleine***

**Rachel Hindmarsh**

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for  
award of the degree of MPhil in the Faculty of Arts, School of Modern Languages,  
September 2018.

**24,737 words**

## **Abstract**

During the First World War, Guillaume Apollinaire embarked on an epistolary relationship with schoolteacher Madeleine Pagès. The letters trace the pleasures and pressures of sustaining a long-distance love affair, but also the multifarious challenges of writing while being immersed in the violent reality of a world-shaping historical event. Out of these encounters with the corporeally absent, but textually present, other and the material world of the trenches, Apollinaire's self comes into being on the epistolary page. Where Apollinaire scholarship has sensitively explored Apollinaire's written subjectivity in his challenging and varied poetry collections, the letters to Madeleine remain undervalued as biographical documents that can merely clarify or provide context for his other works. This thesis readdresses this critical lacuna, exploring how Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine reveal a self tentatively coming into being through language.

The thesis argues that the representation of the non-visual senses in Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine provide a fresh critical perspective on Apollinaire's construction of the epistolary self. The non-visual senses operate as a receptive interface between the self, other, and material world. By calling into question the integrity of the body and its boundaries, they work to deny or displace pre-formed and fixed concepts of selfhood. This thesis will trace a three-part narrative of the sensory body in Apollinaire's letters in order to explore this newly vulnerable selfhood: it considers how Apollinaire touches the skin of the exterior of the body, how he crosses this boundary to explore the interior of the body through taste and smell, and finally how he responds to the fracturing of the body in the act of listening. By drawing attention to normally marginalised sensory experiences, this thesis opens up fresh vistas for the study of Apollinaire's epistolary selfhood that resonates beyond Apollinaire scholarship into war literature studies and modernism more generally.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisors Professor Susan Harrow and Dr Albertine Fox for their fantastic support, feedback and patience. Susan was instrumental in guiding me towards Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine at the start of this project. The fortnightly School of Modern Languages Postgraduate Research meetings, led by Professor Mathew Brown, provided me and my fellow students with an open, supportive, and invaluable space in which to work through our ideas and engage with each other's research. Thanks to my Dad for assiduous proofreading, and for being willing to engage in many conversations about French literature over the past year despite this being far from his academic comfort zone. Lastly, thanks to Alice and Blanche for helping me to navigate the world of postgraduate research, and for their wonderful support and friendship.

### **Author's Declaration**

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: ..... DATE:.....

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## Introduction

‘Vous savez que ce pays est maintenant plein de charmes [pour] moi à cause des lettres que j’y ai reçues de vous et du grand secret, le nôtre, que vous m’y avez confié.’<sup>1</sup> When he wrote this sentence to Madeleine Pagès, on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1915, Guillaume Apollinaire’s sector of Les Hurlus in Northern France was in reality swarming with ‘l’horrible horreur de millions de grosses mouches bleues. Nous sommes tombés dans un lieu sinistre où à toutes les horreurs de la guerre, l’horreur du site, l’abondance épouvantable des cimetières se joignent la privation d’arbres, d’eau, de véritable terre même.’<sup>2</sup> Three months into an epistolary courtship arising from a chance meeting on a train to Marseille on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1915, the poet and his lover had declared their feelings for each other only a few days earlier. The gulf between ‘ce pays [...] plein de charmes’ and the physically and mentally oppressive fear of the trench environment reveals a broader tension between Apollinaire’s eroticised fantasy of shared ‘secret’ desire and the material frames that shape the rest of his immediate and corporeal reality. This tension is ‘à cause des lettres’; it is exquisitely captured in the epistolary form, which in its physical traversal of distance mediates between not only two spaces and times, but two writing selves.<sup>3</sup> The letter becomes a space where the self comes into being, in dialogue with these competing pressures of the imagined other at the far end of the epistolary tie and the material world of the trenches.

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<sup>1</sup> Guillaume Apollinaire, ‘17 juillet 1915’, *Lettres à Madeleine* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2005), p. 91. All subsequent references to the letters will be from this edition.

<sup>2</sup> Apollinaire, ‘1 juillet 1915’, *Lettres à Madeleine*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>3</sup> Liz Stanley writes on the dialogical aspect of letter writing in: Liz Stanley, ‘The Epistolarium: On Theorizing Letters and Correspondences,’ *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, 12 (2004), 212-214.

When Apollinaire describes his and Madeleine's shared love as a 'grand secret', he alludes to the secrecy of Madeleine's glimpsed body on the train; unknown, inviolate, yet violently desired.<sup>4</sup> When he describes having fallen into the 'horreurs de la guerre', his experience is then mediated by an awareness of his own corporeality. It is the non-visual senses that bring Apollinaire's body into contact and confrontation with his material, and materially imagined, surroundings.<sup>5</sup> When philosopher Susan Buck Morris describes the senses as sites of freedom, containing an 'uncivilised and uncivilisable trace', she articulates not only the uncertain and shifting parameters of this interface but also its threatening potential: the non-visual senses call into question the integrity of the body and its boundaries, and so work to deny or displace pre-formed and fixed concepts of selfhood.<sup>6</sup> This thesis therefore engages with the nascent field of sensory studies, particularly readdressing the marginalisation of non-visual sense experiences, to open a fresh critical perspective on Apollinaire's construction of the epistolary self. Not only exploring a genre of Apollinaire's work previously undervalued and neglected in studies of the poet's challenging written subjectivity, this thesis will also forge a new critical space within Apollinaire studies by asking how his selfhood can be refracted and rewritten through his interactions with the world. My literary approach, reading Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine not as historical documents of life but as literary texts in their own right, will further probe how this drawing of the sensory

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<sup>4</sup> Laurence Campa, 'Editor's Foreword' in Guillaume Apollinaire, *Letters to Madeleine* ed. by Laurence Campa, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2010), p. xix.

<sup>5</sup> I draw the phrase 'materially imagined' from the work of Gaston Bachelard. Steven Connor explains that Bachelard uses the phrase to signify both 'the materiality of imagining as well as the imagination of the material'. Imagination for Bachelard is 'itself always implicated in the world that it attempts to imagine'; to visualise a muddy field is really to imagine it 'in a muscular fashion, in terms of the resistance or release that we would feel in encountering [it]', 'in terms of the theories of the nature of such material forms that are embodied in our habitual or learned comportments towards them and our likely or possibly bodily interactions with them'. Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), p. 40.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Patrizia di Bello and Gabriel Koureas (eds.), *Art, History and the Senses: 1830 to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 171.



epistolary self relates to a wider narrative of modernist selfhood as pliant and permeable. This thesis will therefore unravel Apollinaire's tangled weaving of self, other, and world, as he sustains his wartime epistolary relationship with Madeleine.

In the shadow of the poetry that would become *Calligrammes* (1918) – Apollinaire's passionately independent and formally diverse collection of poetry written before and during the First World War – the letters to Madeleine are most often relegated to a footnote, useful as a fact-checking tool to clarify, or provide context for, the poems. Michel Décaudin introduces a chapter on Apollinaire's correspondence by stating that letters contain 'd'utiles informations biographiques', initially only discussing the specific letters to Madeleine as a means of making sense of the overlapping end and start dates of Apollinaire's relationship with his previous lover, Lou.<sup>7</sup> Margaret Davies most clearly articulates the methodological drive behind such biographically focused reading when she argues that in the letters to Madeleine:

[the] whole period of [Apollinaire's] life is illuminated as if by searchlight. One can follow him day by day, know if he slept well, what dreams he had, where he managed to wash. Now one can actually see, not merely divine, just how multifarious and complex his behaviour was, how many moods and modes of being existed in him simultaneously, just as one has seen in his poetry so many different tones juxtaposed.<sup>8</sup>

Davies recognises the potential of the letters to demystify Apollinaire's subjectivity – the mystery of which is rooted biographically in Apollinaire's onomastic fluctuations between Wilhelm Apollinaris de Kostrowitzky (his civil identity) and the pseudonym Guillaume Apollinaire (chosen in 1899 as he embarked on his career), and is expressed in his poetry in attempts to constitute a legendary identity (in 'Merveille de la guerre', for example, where he

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<sup>7</sup> Michel Décaudin, *Apollinaire* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 2002), p. 195; p. 198. The letters to Lou (full name, Genevieve Marguerite Marie-Louise de Pillot de Coligny) are granted more critical attention in almost all writing on Apollinaire's epistolary relationships.

<sup>8</sup> Margaret Davies, *Apollinaire* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), p. 269.

writes: 'Je lègue à l'avenir l'histoire de Guillaume Apollinaire').<sup>9</sup> Davies therefore reveals a desire to seek order in Apollinaire's life as a basis for more meaningful interpretation of his writing. Yet in using the epistolary form to do so, she subscribes to the illusion that letters are unproblematic documents of life that reveal the 'real' self. Sociologist Liz Stanley warns of the limits of this interpretation of life-writing: her pioneering work to create a distinct field of epistolary studies over the past two decades is driven by a desire to shift attention away from biographical facticity and towards the performative, textual, and rhetorical aspects of letters.<sup>10</sup> Where Davies used the comparative 'just as' to disavow any difference between the textual and the extratextual, Stanley sees in the epistolary form a productive tension between the writing self of the present and the written self, constructed on the page as the writer represents – or rather recalls, reconstructs, and reimagines – his/her experiences and thoughts.

The construction of this writing-written self is continuously shaped as the letter-writer recognises that they are addressing not just a mute audience but another 'writing self in waiting', and their tone and content shifts in response to their ever-evolving relationship with the secondary writing self.<sup>11</sup> This 'mobile and fluid performance of the self', as described by literary scholar Jan Montefiore, is most transparent in Apollinaire's correspondence with Madeleine when he encloses a letter to Madeleine's mother or tempers his language for fear of his letters being intercepted or censored by the military authorities.<sup>12</sup> Yet, the subtle

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<sup>9</sup> Susan Harrow, *The Material, the Real, and the Fractured Self: Subjectivity and Representation from Rimbaud to Réda* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 87; Guillaume Apollinaire, 'Merveille de la guerre', *Calligrammes* ed. by Gérard Purnelle (Paris: Flammarion, 2013) pp. 157-158. All subsequent references to poems in the *Calligrammes* collection will be from this edition.

<sup>10</sup> Stanley, 'The Epistolarium', 201-235.

<sup>11</sup> Stanley, 'The Epistolarium', p. 212.

<sup>12</sup> Jan Montefiore, 'Introduction 1. 'Dear Reader': Definitions of the Epistolary Self', *European Studies*, xxxii (2002), p. 98. Christa Hämmerle argues that the tension between the letter-writer's view of oneself, and view of the other, is intensified due to the interception and censorship of letters during the First World War; the moral

modulations over the course of his and Madeleine's nineteen-month relationship reveal the more nuanced ways in which Apollinaire constructs his epistolary self, ever alert to the certainty of being read and examined. The relationship between self and other is therefore increasingly problematic: the written-writing self not only relates to the recipient at the other end of the epistolary tie, but also sees himself, through the imagined lens of his reader, as a sort of 'other' on the page. The epistolary form now collides with the discontinuous, fractured, and unresolved modern subjectivity launched by Arthur Rimbaud's 'Je est un autre'.<sup>13</sup> In her theorisation of the epistolary self, Davies concedes Apollinaire's 'complex and multifarious' nature but unequivocally connects the lived and poetic self. She therefore presupposes an integral, continuous and autonomous selfhood, arguing that it is the critic's task to unearth this selfhood by exploring Apollinaire's epistolary correspondence. In contrast, Stanley's work on epistolary form allows for an approach to Apollinaire's letters that prioritises an exploration of the fissuring of the modern self, which comes tentatively into being through language. The continual negotiation of self and other, forcing and reinforcing the fracturing of the written-writing self, transforms the epistolary form into a radically creative site for exploring modern constructions of selfhood.

If Davies is restrictive in her prioritising of bibliographical detail, her interest in the prosaic, quotidian content of Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine does spark intriguing questions about the relationship between the self and the material world in the epistolary

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policing of the tone of letters led to acts of self-censorship from soldiers in order to reassure their loved ones at home. She also comments on the wider circle of a letters readership in this time; as the only form of communication between the trenches and home, letters were passed between relatives and friends. Christa Hämmerle, 'You let a weeping woman call you home? Private correspondences during the First World War in Austria and Germany' in Rebecca Earle (ed.), *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter Writers 1600-1945* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999) pp. 151-182.

<sup>13</sup> Rimbaud, cited in Roger Little, *Guillaume Apollinaire* (London: Athlone Press, 1976), p. 11. In Guillaume Apollinaire, *Alcools* ed. by Garnet Rees (London: Athlone Press, 1975), Rees provides a sensitive exploration of the fracturing of subjectivity in Apollinaire's pre-war poetry.

frame.<sup>14</sup> Davies roots the illumination of Apollinaire's 'multifarious and complex behaviour' in the material specificity of physical objects and everyday practices, thus engaging with long-standing research concerns in the humanities about how such material frames of reference and representation are inflected with subjective meaning and desire.<sup>15</sup> Once Décaudin has developed his interpretation of Apollinaire's correspondence beyond their bibliographical 'usefulness', he offers a sensitive reading of how these questions play out in the epistolary form: he suggests that, when Apollinaire imagines Madeleine's body in his letters, 'les frontières entre le monde perçu et le monde rêvé disparaissent dans l'espace poétique qui opère la fusion de l'un et de l'autre'.<sup>16</sup> The radical encounter between the epistolary self and the multifarious other that Stanley puts forth is reworked here in relation to a blurring of boundaries in their imagined textual encounter. The letters foster a private, shared 'espèce poétique' that transcends the temporal and spatial distance between Apollinaire and Madeleine, yet equally they pull Apollinaire back to his lived, material reality: the letter is a physical object, writing it constitutes an embodied textual practice, and sending it requires the participation of a network of postal workers and infrastructure.<sup>17</sup> This indeterminacy between the material and the imaginative is made all the more problematic by Décaudin's source as a passage where Apollinaire dreams of Madeleine's body. Writing on the gendered sexualisation of the female letter-writer, Rebecca Earle calls attention to how the physicality of the letter might stand in for the body of the letter-writer in a fantasy of intimacy: she quotes eighteenth-century epistolary novel, *Court Intrigues*, where Mrs Manley proclaims to

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<sup>14</sup> Davies is restricted mainly by the fact that she was writing before the surge in epistolary studies at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which reconsidered and drew attention to the textual and performative potential of letters.

<sup>15</sup> Harrow's *The Real, the Material, and the Fractured Self* most productively engages with these research concerns in the context of Apollinaire studies.

<sup>16</sup> Décaudin, *Apollinaire*, p. 207.

<sup>17</sup> In her comparative study of different forms of long-distance contact, Esther Milne writes that it is 'through' and 'with' the body that users write letters, yet the recipient's corporeal body is absent. Esther Milne, *Letters, Postcards, Email: Technologies of Presence* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 4.

her correspondent that his 'letter was my bedfellow last night; I laid it upon my breast where my heart beat it a thousand welcomes'.<sup>18</sup> This is an epistolary encounter where the opening of the envelope becomes an undressing, the reading and handling of the letter a quasi-sexual textual encounter. In navigating the relationship to the other, the already fractured epistolary self is therefore drawn into a material world that exerts further, competing pressures: they are forced to interrogate how they engage with and represent the material world within the letter, how they approach the letter as a material object, and how this attention to materiality shapes the imagination of their lover's body. The modernist letter-writer, constructing their selfhood in writing, feels the weight of the material world at every turn.

The multi-layered blurring of the 'monde perçu' and the 'monde rêvé' in Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine hinges on their physical trajectory; while the letters are containers of intimate, shared desire, they must pass through many hands to traverse Apollinaire and Madeleine's distinct material zones.<sup>19</sup> This tension between the private and public, the individual and collective, is amplified in new ways in the specific conditions of the First World War. André Breton's outraged response to Apollinaire's equivocal and problematic rendering of war in *Calligrammes* reveals the contemporary anxiety (sustained even among early Apollinaire scholars such as Marie-Jeanne Durry) concerning the ethical imperative of reflecting the war's atrocities:

[Dans les poèmes d'Apollinaire] passait toujours la même flamme mais rien n'y marquait une prise de conscience appréciable des événements. [...] Les pires réalités de l'époque étaient éludées ici, les plus légitimes inquiétudes détournées au bénéfice d'une activité de jeu qui se donne toute licence dans les *Calligrammes* proprement

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<sup>18</sup> Rebecca Earle, 'Introduction: Letters, Writers, and the Historian' in Earle (ed.), *Epistolary Selves*, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Terry Eagleton writes, in a quotation that I will return to in greater detail in Chapter One of this thesis: 'nothing could be at once more intimate and more alienable [...] the letter is that part of the body which is detachable: torn from the very depths of the subject, it can equally be torn from the player's possession, opened by meddling fingers [...] hijacked as a trophy or stashed away as spoils'. Cited in Carolyn Steedman, 'A woman writing a letter' in Earle (ed.), *Epistolary Selves*, p. 120.

dots, tandis que l'esprit s'obstine on ne peut plus déraisonnablement à vouloir trouver son bien dans le « décor » de la guerre.<sup>20</sup>

Susan Harrow reads Breton's condemnation as exposing a fundamental question pervading the representability of war: how to reconcile writing one's individual, lived experience and the collective, more abstract narrative of History.<sup>21</sup> Breton wishes that Apollinaire could provide a single, unifying and 'légitime' voice, recording 'les pires réalités' in accordance with a collectively prescribed moral response. Yet Harrow, building on the detailed contextual work of Claude Debon and Annette Becker and sensitive readings of *Calligrammes* by Timothy Mathews, compellingly argues that Apollinaire's varied poetic responses in *Calligrammes* form an unapologetic commitment to representing his subjective perception of war; however uneven and contradictory or fleetingly recalled and recognised, but always resisting public and collective recuperation.<sup>22</sup> From the fictionalised rebirth as the mobilisation posters go up in the opening poem, 'La Petite Auto', to the testamentary anticipation of death in the closing poem, 'La Jolie Rousse', Apollinaire's self comes into being in the intervening collection, shaped by the radically changed ideological and material conditions of war but also, in turn, actively shaping their representation as history.<sup>23</sup> Harrow's insistence on the fracturing of the self as it pushes and pulls with these historical pressures is located in her work's productive overlap with autobiography studies, most notably Paul John Eakin's work on the tension between the 'intractable, broken reality of twentieth-century history' and the 'irrepressible

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<sup>20</sup> Cited in Claude Debon, *Guillaume Apollinaire Après Alcools. 1, Calligrammes : le Poète et la Guerre* (Paris: Minard, 1981), p. 126.

<sup>21</sup> Harrow, *The Real, the Material, and the Fractured Self*, p. 84.

<sup>22</sup> Harrow, *The Real, the Material, and the Fractured Self*, p. 83; Debon, *Guillaume Apollinaire Après Alcools*; Annette Becker, *Guillaume Apollinaire, une Biographie de Guerre, 1914-1918-2009* (Paris: Tallandier, 2009); Timothy Mathews, *Reading Apollinaire: Theories of Poetic Language* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987).

<sup>23</sup> Harrow, *The Real, the Material, and the Fractured Self*, pp. 84-89.

drive of the poet's imagination' as he/she seeks to record his/her experiences.<sup>24</sup> By engaging with autobiography studies, Harrow puts forth a persuasive reading of the tensions Apollinaire faces as he poetically engages with a conflict in which he both participates and engages in writing. In so doing, she opens up fresh critical possibilities for exploring how the epistolary negotiation of self, other, and world is also complicated by the backdrop of war.

Breton not only takes issue with Apollinaire's refusal to condemn the war; he is horrified by what he perceives as Apollinaire's aestheticization of the conflict, represented as an 'activité de jeu' by a poet by this time renowned for his commitment to structural and formal experimentation, cubist-informed simultaneity, and semantic openness. My thesis argues that the epistolary self is constituted performatively, textually, and rhetorically (in line with Stanley's work), and that, in the case of Apollinaire, it is a modernist self too. Therefore, it will be important to attend to not only the broader question of navigating between individual temporalities and historical epochs, but to *how* Apollinaire does this in the epistolary form. How does the self-formative activity of letter-writing resist the processes of fragmentation and dislocation fundamental to modernism's thematic, formal and structural experiment? Does Apollinaire explore the possibilities of the emergent, perspectival, and intertextual nature of the epistolary form, or temper his literary experimentation in response to Madeleine's needs?<sup>25</sup> How does he use language to destabilise expectations of selfhood?

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<sup>24</sup> Paul John Eakin, *Touching the World: Reference in Autobiography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 175.

<sup>25</sup> Stanley outlines these terms in 'The Epistolarium': she describes 'emergent' as meaning 'not occasioned, structured', as letter-writers write with 'their own preoccupations and conventions and own epistolary ethics', and 'perspectival' as the fact that the 'structure and content [of letters] changes according to the recipient and passing time'. Stanley, 'The Epistolarium', p. 202. Furthermore, Sarah Poustie explains the intertextual nature of letters when she writes that letters 'push and play with definitional boundaries and there are different aspects of "letterness"'. Letter-writing can shape conceptualisation, rather than trying to fit letter-writing into conceptual boxes'. Sarah Poustie, "'That is supposed to be my foot": Letters, Bodies and Epistolary Co-presence' in Liz Stanley (ed.), *Olive Schreiner and Company: Letters and "Drinking in the External World"* (OSLP Working Papers on Letters, Letterness & Epistolary Networks No 3, University of Edinburgh 2011), p. 139.

At the heart of these questions is a fundamental tension between creative experiment and human experience, between art and actuality. In 'La Jolie Rousse', Apollinaire pleads with the artists who have come before him, saying: 'Nous qui quêtions partout l'aventure/ Nous ne sommes pas vos ennemis/ Nous voulons nous donner de vastes et d'étranges domaines'.<sup>26</sup> Read by Jay Winter as a delicate balancing act between the false modernist polarity of tradition and innovation, Apollinaire refuses to conform to a unitary definition of modernism; he is not the enemy of the past nor solely seeking adventure, but rather seeks to occupy the shifting, ambiguous '[vaste] et [d'étrange]' space in-between.<sup>27</sup> This thesis argues that the letters to Madeleine too become a vast and strange space where the construction of the self unfolds.

The body underpins Apollinaire's negotiation with both the other and the multifarious pressures of the material world (the letter as object, the materiality of the body, the lived experience of war). Media theorist Vivian Sobchack's claim that the body and subjectivity are mutually constitutive can help us to understand how Apollinaire's mobile and fluid performance of the self is shaped by his sensory experiences. 'The lived body', Sobchack argues, is a 'phenomenological term that insists on 'the' objective body as always also lived subjectively as 'my' body, diacritically invested and active in making sense and meaning in and of the world.'<sup>28</sup> An extract from H.W. Nevins's article in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1914,

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<sup>26</sup> Apollinaire, 'La Jolie Rousse', *Calligrammes*, p. 197. In a fully annotated bilingual edition of *Calligrammes*, S. Lockerie provides an introduction, and together Lockerie and Hyde Greet provide illuminating notes to Apollinaire's poems. They note that in these lines, Apollinaire maintains a balance between being an individual and being a representative of all innovative artists. Guillaume Apollinaire, *Calligrammes* trans. by Anne Hyde Greet (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 505.

<sup>27</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 60.



describing a painting of the trenches sent by his son Christopher Nevinson, articulates how the transformation of the body into a receptive interface between the interior and the world is mediated through the non-visual senses:

Suddenly, the air full of the shriek and boom of bullets and shells; hammering of machine-guns, shouting of captains, crash of approaching cannon. And all the time one felt the deadly microbes crawling in the suppurating wounds, devouring the flesh, undermining the thin walls of the entrails. One felt the infinitely little, the pestilence that walks in darkness, at work in the midst of the gigantic turmoil making history.<sup>29</sup>

The visual topography of war is immediately dismantled as the passage opens with a cacophony of noise, mirroring the chaos caused by the disruption to the traditional sensory hierarchy. Santanu Das has introduced welcome innovation within literary studies of the First World War by reading such sensory disturbance in line with Paul Rodaway's call in *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place* to pay attention to the non-visual senses as both 'a relationship to a world' and 'in themselves a kind of structuring of place and defining of space': Das explores how modern warfare severed the traditional connection between sight, space, and danger, forcing its participants to engage with the non-visual senses as a way of perceiving and understanding their presence in relation to a newly alien space.<sup>30</sup> As an imagined rather than actual participant of the attack, Nevinson initially appears to afford himself a level of distance from this disorientation in the pronoun 'one'. Yet as he shifts focus from describing the subject's environment to imagining the sensory experience of the body *in* this environment, he undermines this attempt by delivering a visceral shock to the reader: the microbes 'devouring the flesh' and the 'suppurating' pestilence prompt them to rethink the body as an integrated, coherent whole and imagine instead the potentially deadly

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<sup>29</sup> Cited in Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 96.

<sup>30</sup> Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 73-106; Paul Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 7.

gustatory and olfactory transgression of corporeal boundaries. The haptic runs through these different layers of multisensory experience and representation, extended beyond touch as the active or passive experience of human skin to incorporate 'kinaesthesia (the body's sense of its own movement); proprioception (the body's sense of its orientation in space); and the vestibular sense (that of balance, reliant upon the inner ear)'.<sup>31</sup> The narrowed focus and breaking down of the body into flesh and entrails suggest a keen awareness of both the texture of the exposed wound and the whole body's altered presence in relation to its material surroundings. Meanwhile, the dizzying shift in focus between microbes on the body and the 'gigantic' wider context of history formally mimics both the disorientation of the battle experience and the turmoil of navigating both individual and collective experience, the ambiguity of the pronoun 'one' becoming newly relevant. Nevinson has shown how the sensory body is inextricable from our sense of self, in relation to the both the other and the world that we inhabit.

By their 'structuring of place and defining of space', the non-visual senses emerge as operating powerfully on the carnal border, the seam of contact, between the self, other, and world.<sup>32</sup> Anthropologist Nadia C. Seremetakis's ambitious work on the fertile overlap between the study of the senses, modernity, and material culture can help us to understand this interface further.<sup>33</sup> Writing that the 'senses in modernity are the switching place where the structure of experience and the structure of knowledge converge and cross', Seremetakis reflects on how the senses are crucial to how one seeks to 'make sense and meaning in and

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<sup>31</sup> Abbie Garrington, *Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 16.

<sup>32</sup> Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies*, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Nadia C. Seremetakis (ed.), *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

of the world' that Sobchack highlighted as the role of the lived body.<sup>34</sup> They are at the forefront of the everyday passage of the self as it interacts with material culture, but do not merely provide tools for discriminating or distinguishing its physical layers: Seremetakis argues that the senses open up a more probing passage between the experience and knowledge of the lived individual body, and therefore lead to the broader question of how to tease out an understanding of the self in this culture. When Nevinson draws on the language of the haptic to describe the non-visual sensory encounters in the passage above, then representation can be added to Seremetakis's crossroads of experience and knowledge: the 'hammering' and 'crash' of the sound of weapons, the textured dimension of the word 'flesh', and the imagination of a smell that 'walks in darkness', all reveal how the materiality of Nevinson's multisensory coordinates rolls into his language. This is why Nevinson can slip so easily from the deadly microbes to the turmoil of history: it is precisely because the non-visual senses are the 'switching place' between experience, knowledge, and representation, that they can so powerfully bring into relief a more nuanced understanding of the evolving relationships between self, other, and world. The body has become a privileged site of expressivity, revealing productive narrative possibilities for how the self makes and unmakes itself in the trenches.

Seremetakis is careful to highlight that it is the senses 'in modernity' which provide such a provoking and stimulating backdrop to exploring the self. The burgeoning field of sensory studies, indebted to work by David Howes and Constance Classen that sought to recover the cultural importance of the senses in understanding the past, has recently become

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<sup>34</sup> Nadia C. Seremetakis, 'Prologue' in Seremetakis (ed.), *The Senses Still*, p. vii.

more attuned to the impact of specific sensory contexts on subjectivity.<sup>35</sup> In two important studies, Tim Armstrong and Sarah Danius build on Seremetakis's work by making compelling cases for modernism's sensory realignment faced with the sensory overload and upheaval so crucial to the modernist period.<sup>36</sup> Danius's claim that 'high-modernist aesthetics is inseparable from a historically specific crisis of the senses, a sensory crisis sparked by, among other things, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century technological innovations, particularly technologies of perception' finds a persuasive echo in Armstrong's insistence that 'the senses themselves are reconceived' in the changing material and ideological conditions of modernity.<sup>37</sup> Armstrong argues that the foregrounding of the immediacy and individuality of the body in modernism (the 'lived' experience) over an abstract, universal self has its roots in the heightened sensitivity to sensation central to the modern experience. He quotes American physician George M. Beard's description of the body as a battery to explore how the pressures of new technologies of perception – from the instantaneous communication of the telegraph and the extension and extrapolation of the eye in the cinema to the ability of the photograph to store sensory material – impact the self. Beard imagines the body with 'so many additional lamps interposed in the circuit [...] supplied at the expense of the nervous system, the dynamic power of which has not correspondingly increased'.<sup>38</sup> Technology has outstripped the human scale and abilities, simultaneously opening up new ways of perceiving the world and exposing the lack of the human body not expanded by technology. But

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<sup>35</sup> David Howes and Constance Classen have both published a wide body of work, but their most important contributions are: David Howes, *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Modern Age* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); David Howes (ed.) *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2005); Constance Classen, *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Constance Classen, David Howes and Anthony Synott (eds.), *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>36</sup> Tim Armstrong, *Modernism: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), pp. 90-115; Sarah Danius, *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

<sup>37</sup> Danius, *The Senses of Modernism*, p. 3; Armstrong, *Modernism*, p. 90.

<sup>38</sup> Cited in Armstrong, *Modernism*, p. 92.

Armstrong also reads Beard's anxiety over modernity as a challenge to the self that is struggling to cope with the pace and disorientation, the 'sensory crisis', of modern life.

In *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in 20<sup>th</sup> Century French Thought*, Martin Jay argues that this sensory crisis of perception, and the challenges to selfhood that it brings, is located most significantly in the sense of vision.<sup>39</sup> Theorising a 'crisis of ocularcentrism' that draws on work by Karen Jacobs and David Michael Levin on the status of vision in modernity, he argues that the new technologies described above are most pertinent due to how they induce an anxiety about what the eyes can and cannot see, thus sparking a deeper questioning of the accepted authority and tuition of vision that had previously dominated western philosophy; Heraclitus, for example, is recorded writing in 500BC that 'those things of which there is sight, hearing, and knowledge: these are what I honour most!', of which 'the eyes are more exact witnesses than the ears'.<sup>40</sup> Where knowing is so strongly associated with seeing, Steven Connor argues that the will to know the self inevitably still takes on a scopic form in modernity: just as vision signifies distance, differentiation, and domination, the self who sees itself as a separated object of knowledge from the world is awarded the same clarity and stability.<sup>41</sup> Jay's work is therefore significant in asking how the self, guided by vision, is challenged in modernity and through modernism. Yet in answering these questions by exploring the different facets of vision, Jay, alongside his contemporaries, still prioritises an

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<sup>39</sup> Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>40</sup> Karen Jacobs, *The Eye's Mind: Literary Modernism and Visual Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); David Michael Levin, *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Heraclitus cited in Levin, *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Steven Connor, 'The Modern Auditory I' in Roy Porter (ed.), *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Middle Ages to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 203-224.

ocular mode of modernity and a visual landscape of modernism. He ultimately participates in a widespread re-inscription of the critical marginalisation of other sensory experiences.

One of the central claims in this thesis is that Apollinaire scholarship has also suffered from a marginalisation of non-visual sensory experiences. A chapter in David Berry's *The Creative Vision of Guillaume Apollinaire: A Study of Imagination* dedicated to the gustatory, alongside pockets of sensitive analysis by Harrow, Mathews, and Richard Stamelman, marks the greatest attention to proximal sense experience across Apollinaire's poetry.<sup>42</sup> Apollinaire's interest in the relationship of music to the creative process, the rhythmic dynamics of representation, and the use of snippets of conversation and song ensure that sound has received more detailed critical consideration.<sup>43</sup> Yet, owing in part to Apollinaire's experiments with the calligramme form, it is the overlap between Apollinaire's poetry and vision that has been most thoroughly explored, especially by the wide-ranging work of Willard Bohn.<sup>44</sup>

My thesis addresses the marginalisation of non-visual experience in both sensory studies more broadly and in Apollinaire scholarship by exploring the construction of Apollinaire's epistolary self through the non-visual senses. Each chapter will introduce new critical voices from sensory studies injecting much needed attention to the productive overlap of sensory studies with the representation of selfhood, epistolarity, and modernism. These

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<sup>42</sup> David Berry, *The Creative Vision of Guillaume Apollinaire: A Study of Imagination* (Saratoga: Anma Libri, 1982); Harrow, *The Real, the Material, and the Fractured Self*; Mathews, *Reading Apollinaire*, Richard Stamelman, 'Apollinaire's 'Cortège': The Poetics of Introspection', *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature*, 9 (1973), 406-419.

<sup>43</sup> For example, see: Catherine Mayaux, 'Le Monde Sonore dans Alcools', *Recherches et Travaux*, 14 (1999), 55-66.

<sup>44</sup> For example, see: Willard Bohn, *Apollinaire, Visual Poetry, and Art Criticism* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1993); *Reading Visual Poetry* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2011).

voices will provide a theoretical basis for why these marginalised senses can provide such exciting new insights for Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine.

The first chapter, 'Skin, Smoke, and Selfhood: The Haptic' explores the haptic through the interrelation of smoke and skin as a means of establishing the contours of Apollinaire's relationship between the self, the other (in the form of his nascent epistolary relationship with Madeleine) and the world (namely, the challenging material landscape of modern warfare). As it traces the emergence of a 'haptic geography', the chapter explores how the corporeal integrity and stability of self, suggested by the protection of the encasing skin, is challenged by the fragility of the seam of contact between the self and the material world in the trenches. I demonstrate how the added pressures of the corporeal absence but textual presence of Apollinaire's lover Madeleine then powerfully collide in the epistolary form. This chapter includes multiple comparisons between epistolary passages and poems sent in letters and later published as part of *Calligrammes*; this approach is testimony to the interdisciplinary nature of the epistolary form, but more crucially it allows us to bring into focus the specific pressures and possibilities of Apollinaire's epistolary self.

Where the first chapter explores the shifting nature of the exterior of the body, the second chapter, "'Entrailles' Exposed: Taste and Smell', delves beyond the skin boundary to imagine gustatory and olfactory encounters with the interior of the body. It demonstrates how Apollinaire explores the crossing and destabilising of bodily boundaries inherent to these encounters to use taste and smell as a springboard for exploring fears and anxieties over the stability of his own self in the trenches. This chapter therefore focuses on how proximal sensory experiences blur the lines between the materiality of the perceiving body and the perceived world, and how this blurring deepens the turmoil of the epistolary self.

The third and final chapter, 'Fracture: Sound and Hearing', goes further still by probing how sound relates to the motif of fracture. Here, I suggest ways in which Apollinaire listens to both the world of the trenches around him, and how he distinguishes Madeleine's voice among this soundscape of war. Building on this analysis of Madeleine's voice, the chapter concludes by considering the overlap of listening and the haptic to suggest a new way of thinking about the epistolary form in terms of aural and textual prosthesis, and how this can provide fresh insight into Apollinaire's epistolary self in relation to both the other and the material world around him.

This thesis therefore tells a three-part narrative of the sensory body in Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine in order to explore his construction of the epistolary self. It considers how Apollinaire's epistolary self changes as he moves from touching the skin of the exterior of the body, to crossing this boundary to explore the interior of the body through taste and smell, and finally to examining how the body fractures in the act of listening. Drawing attention to these non-visual sensory encounters in the letters to Madeleine allows us to ask important questions of how the self interacts with the other and the material world, how this engagement and openness to materiality contests modernist notions of the self as pliant and permeable, and how this is challenged in a literary form that is shaped by questions of subjectivity and the materiality of the body. Therefore, this thesis first turns to skin to explore Apollinaire's sensory, epistolary self.



## Chapter One

### Skin, Smoke, and Selfhood: The Haptic

Only one month into his epistolary courtship with Madeleine, Apollinaire wrote to her an overwhelmingly tactile description of his experience of a recent bromine gas attack:

Toujours est-il qu'après avoir quitté le bois tandis que les obus miaulaient prenant une autre direction que la mienne, je me suis tourné vers les tranchées car j'étais dans un lieu découvert face à des hauteurs occupées par les Allemands et je vis des masses de fumée verdâtre qui roulaient, il ne me parut point que cette fumée venait jusqu'à moi mais ma vue se voilait, je titubais, il me semblait que le sol tournaient violemment en changeant souvent le sens de ses torsions, c'est alors qu'étant dans le sainfoin en fleur je mis le pied sur un corps mou qui sauta, me terrifiant littéralement et poussant un cri semblable à la voix des polichinelles à qui on presse sur le ventre [...] Cela me réveilla et je me retrouvai dans le même état de simplicité qu'avant.<sup>1</sup>

The 'masses de fumée verdâtre' transform Apollinaire's grip on his environment by disturbing the sensory hierarchy. Apollinaire writes that his 'vue se voilait'; the rolling smoke has rendered his vision hazy and clouded over, as if creating a screen or veil between Apollinaire and his normal field of vision. As a result, his clearly orientated striding towards the visible target of the trenches is replaced by a panicked groping in a suddenly dark and unfamiliar world: 'je me suis tourné' becomes 'je titubais', the anchored wood and trenches become a 'sol' that 'tournaient violemment'. The sensory disturbance has necessarily rendered Apollinaire more aware of the materiality of his surroundings: he no longer articulates his movement merely in terms of a sight-governed direction or trajectory, but is now aware of the sensation of stepping on the 'sainfoin en fleur', its particular texture and depth under his feet. In short, he is more aware of his sense of touch, in his hands and through the soles of

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<sup>1</sup> Apollinaire, '25 mai 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, pp. 51-52.

his boots. This chapter will trace the emergence and construction of the self through tactile encounters in Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine. After analysing the passage above to set out a theoretical grounding of touch and subjectivity, it will explore the role of touch in navigating the relationship of the self to the material world and the other, and how these complex relationships powerfully collide in the epistolary form.

When Apollinaire pays attention to texture of the ground, he articulates the understanding of touch as the active or passive experience of the human skin brushing against another object, or, in the words of sociologist Mark Paterson, of 'cutaneous contact'.<sup>2</sup> As the most conspicuous representation of the body, the skin is fundamental to our understanding of touch.<sup>3</sup> Rejecting the traditional metaphors of skin as a surface, membrane, or interface (all of which Connor assiduously traces in *The Book of Skin*), Michel Serres chooses to define skin as a 'milieu', a shared, active environment in which not only the body and world mutually touch, but also the flows which come from hearing, taste, and smell also coincide and interact.<sup>4</sup> When Connor explains that 'if the senses are midplaces where inside and outside meet and meld, then the skin is the global integral of these local area networks', then we can start to interrogate how the skin acts as an interface between a feeling subject and the world.<sup>5</sup>

In situating this description of cutaneous contact amid the emphatic evocation of movement in the run of physical verbs – 'titubais', 'tournait', 'mis le pied', 'sauta', 'poussant un cri' – building upon each other in a series of short, rapid clauses to mimic the action of stumbling quickly over shifting ground, Apollinaire allows us to extend this definition of touch

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Paterson, *The Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies (Senses and Sensibilities)* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), pp. 1-15.

<sup>3</sup> Garrington writes that 'the body is represented most conspicuously by the human skin, the 'cultural border' of 'reciprocal contact'. Garrington, *Haptic Modernism*, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Michel Serres cited in Connor, *The Book of Skin*, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Connor, *The Book of Skin*, p. 27.

to include the often under-examined somatic senses: kinaesthesia, the vestibular sense, and proprioception. When we think about the act of treading on the 'sainfoin en fleur', on the textured ground, then, we can follow Lisa Blackman's call to 'rather than talk about bodies, [...] talk instead of brain-body-world entanglements': the combined meanings of physical touch, formulated together as the 'haptic', become a means of thinking about bodily margins and human subjectivity, about how the self interacts with and is constructed in relation to the world it lives in and moves through.<sup>6</sup> A rethinking of the sensory hierarchy in terms of touch, therefore, unsettles our ideas about ourselves and the worlds around us.<sup>7</sup>

When we then think about Apollinaire treading not only on the ground but another body, we can go a step further still in our understanding of the haptic. Just as Apollinaire has a heightened awareness of the texture of the 'sainfoin en fleur', his first response to stepping on a fellow fallen soldier is to register that the soldier's body feels 'mou'. As this body releases 'un cri semblable à la voix des polichinelles à qui on presse sur le ventre', Apollinaire's terror is articulated and extended in relation to different levels of the haptic: the auditory cry, as a form of touch in a vibrational sense, is preceded and made possible by bodily movement ('sauta', 'poussant un cri'), and then compared to the familiar action of pressing the belly of a Punch doll. Can his terrified response also be understood within the framework of the haptic? When the philosopher Edith Wyschogrod calls for a recovery of the meanings of tactility, allowing room for a 'decoupling of touch from mere sensation', she reflects a shift in cultural studies on the haptic to accommodate the metaphorical connotations of touch that reveal themselves in the conceptual slippage of verbs such as 'touching' and 'feeling'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Lisa Blackman, *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation* (London: SAGE Publications, 2012) p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Irving Goh and Ryan Bishop, 'Introduction', *SubStance*, special issue on 'Plus d'un toucher': *Touching Worlds*, 40.3 (2011), 3-9.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in Paterson, *The Senses of Touch*, p. 13.

Paterson locates this conceptual slippage in the 'profound world of philosophical verification', a world where touch mediates the communication of presence and empathy with others, and is affirmatory and comforting.<sup>9</sup> Yet Apollinaire's immediate and automatic terrified reaction challenges Paterson's emphasis on feeling and emotion; rather, it must be understood as an *affective* response. When the translator of philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, Brian Massumi, describes 'affect' as the 'pre-personal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act', his emphasis on bodily or embodied experience, on the body's capacity to affect and be affected by others, corresponds to the emphasis on movement in Apollinaire's description.<sup>10</sup> Margrit Shildrick most clearly synthesises how understanding touch in terms of affect forges a new way of thinking about touch and subjectivity; for her, touch is:

always an embodied gesture that may sustain a reciprocal sense of solitude and intimacy [...] to touch and be touched speaks to our exposure to, and immersion in, the world of others, and the capacity to be moved beyond reason, in the space of shared vulnerability.<sup>11</sup>

Shildrick's explanation powerfully informs our reading of Apollinaire's negotiation between not only self and world, but now self and other, through touch. Apollinaire not only touches another body and feels its softness; he is 'touched' by it and feels terror. The philosophical verification that the reciprocity of touch affords here reminds Apollinaire that he too could have been, or could still become, the 'corps mou' fallen in battle. He moves 'in the world of

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<sup>9</sup> Paterson, *The Senses of Touch*, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Massumi, 'Translator's Foreword: Pleasures of Philosophy' in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. xvi. Massumi does not reference Apollinaire specifically.

<sup>11</sup> Margrit Shildrick, 'Some Speculations on Matters of Touch', *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 26 (2001), p. 402.

others', but his affective reaction signals that this movement always loops back to his own subjectivity. The haptic therefore encompasses not only both the physical and metaphorical forms of touching others, but also how and what touching can reveal about the self.

When Apollinaire describes the movement of the soft body underfoot in relation to 'des polichinelles à qui on presse sur le ventre', he finally implicates the reader in the blurring of physical and metaphorical touch. By comparing the unimaginable horror of stepping on a fallen soldier to the familiar and playful act of pressing on the belly of a Punch doll, both the addressee and the modern reader are drawn into this haptic experience. As they become aware of their own hands, their own ability to touch, they can relate to Apollinaire's horror and the distant world of the trenches in a more direct and immediate way. Just as Apollinaire's terrified reaction and forced reckoning with his own subjectivity and mortality is sparked by his encounter with the 'corps mou' of another soldier, so the reader is now forced to interrogate their own ability to touch, and in turn be 'touched' by the horror of war, by their encounter with Apollinaire's writing. Already having been transformed within the letter into a suddenly alien and disorientating space, the trench now becomes even more uncertain for the reader; it becomes uncanny, both familiar and unfamiliar, recognisable and terrifying, a space populated by distant others but also by the reading self. Shildrick's space of shared vulnerability therefore reaches beyond the trenches described and onto the interpretative space of the page. When Virginia Woolf records her own response to the evocation of touch in John Singer Sargent's *Gassed* (1919, see Appendix 1), she articulates this very shift: faced with the almost unbearable pathos of the fourth soldier from the right lifting his foot too high in anticipation of an absent collision, Woolf notes in her own blurring of physical and affective touch: 'this little piece of over-emphasis was the final scratch of the surgeon's knife which is

said to hurt more than the whole operation'.<sup>12</sup> It is the raw subjectivity of the pitied soldier feeling his way through a new world which bleeds from the canvas, and exposes Woolf's own subjectivity.

Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine give voice to the soldier in Singer Sargent's painting. Touch in these letters marks not only the threshold between the self and the world, but also the threshold between the self and myriad others – the other soldiers, the other absent lover to whom the letters are addressed, the other modern reader. Just as it was the smoke of the bromine attack which initially thrust Apollinaire into the world of touch, this chapter will trace further encounters with smoke and skin, as the organ most associated with touch, to grasp the greater significance of the haptic in Apollinaire's epistolary drawing of the self.

Far from the chaos of the bromine attack, in a letter of 11<sup>th</sup> October 1915 Apollinaire draws attention to an underexplored pressure of modern warfare: he praises Madeleine's letters as the 'seul remède à l'ennui'.<sup>13</sup> The poem closing this letter, 'Le Palais du tonnerre', can help us to understand how the haptic mediates such different experiences of the material world of the trenches (see Appendix 2).<sup>14</sup> The opening of the poem appears, at first glance, as an antidote to the confusing and disorientating proprioceptive experience in the passage from the letter above: the poet guides the reader on a simple, methodical and vision-directed tour of the space, nearly every line beginning with a viewing instruction: 'par l'issue', 'en regardant la paroi adverse', 'on voit à gauche et à droit', 'mais en deçà de l'issue', 'à côté de l'issue'. Yet the sense of order and purpose is quickly undercut by a fixation with the minutiae of trench

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<sup>12</sup> Cited in Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Apollinaire, '11 octobre 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 276.

<sup>14</sup> Apollinaire, 'Le Palais du tonnerre' in '11 octobre 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, pp. 278-281.

life which suffocates the narrative, reintroducing the vertiginous quality of the passage above. Not only are objects obsessively recorded, as encapsulated in the breathless phrase ‘des musettes bleues des casques bleus des cravates bleues des vareuses bleues’, but more abstract ‘things’ are dizzyingly re-configured within the confines of these familiar references: the sky is described as ‘morceaux du ciel’, in an echo of ‘morceaux de craie’, creating an impression of the world shrinking above the poet’s head. The shifting descriptions of fire and its subsequent smoke confirm this movement inwards and downwards, further shrinking the already carved-out space within the trench: the ‘[tourbillonnant]’ smoke of the roaring chimney, which would fill the space of the dugout with light and heat, is replaced as the poem continues with a small candle yielding a ‘flamme aussi petite qu’une souris’. In undercutting the kinaesthetic certainty of the vision-guided tour of the trench by recreating the vestibular and proprioceptive *uncertainty* of the bromine attack in the passage from the letters explored above, Apollinaire is able to convey to the reader the suffocating boredom and entrapment of trench life. When Rodaway, in *Sensuous Geographies*, describes the restructuring of place and defining of space through different layers of touch as the formation of a ‘haptic geography’, he provides a framework for how we might think about Apollinaire’s lived experiences: from the chaos of the bromine attack to the jaded isolation of rest periods, Apollinaire conceives of his environment in terms of a personal, changing, haptic geography of his own.<sup>15</sup> Expressed in both the poetic and the epistolary form, these haptic experiences are crucial to understanding Apollinaire’s relationship to the material world.

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<sup>15</sup> Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies*, p. 7. Rodaway is careful to explain that the term ‘haptic’ is adopted for two reasons: ‘it avoids the superficial connotations associated with the everyday word “touch”, and in particular the assumption that touch geographies are only the sensuous experiences of the fingers [...] ‘Haptic’ also refers to Gibson’s “haptic system”, a functional definition of touch as a system involving the coordination of receptor cells and the muscles of the body [...] therefore, about an awareness of presence and of locomotion’. Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies*, p. 7. Rodaway’s work therefore accommodates Apollinaire not only touching the objects in the trench but his awareness of his body moving through this space.

The dizzying reconfiguration of space in the letter that opened this chapter caused Apollinaire not only to lose control over his movement, however, but also his sense of self: the passage ended: ‘Cela me réveilla et je me retrouvai dans le même état de simplicité qu’avant’, in a doubly emphasised recovery (‘réveilla’, ‘retrouvai’) of his previous stability and certainty. But where the reader might expect the poet in ‘Le Palais du tonnerre’, also, to lose his grip on his selfhood, Harrow insightfully draws upon Roland Barthes’s ‘Sémantique de l’objet’ to suggest that this poem can be read conversely as an affirmation of subjectivity.<sup>16</sup> The movement inwards from chimney to candle neatly demonstrates the shifting significance of objects that Barthes identifies in his essay: as the space of the dugout becomes smaller, the candle’s meaning stretches beyond its use value of providing light or heat and instead takes on the enabling and enhancing function of providing comfort and intimacy. The shrinking of physical space acts as a metaphor for a retreat into the familiar and the knowable, a carving-out of an intensely private and intimate space safe from the chaos of the battlefield. As Harrow argues, in so doing, these objects allow Apollinaire to foster and nourish his sense of self in an otherwise strange and threatening environment. Where he recovers his sense of self in the letter above as the smoke clears and his vision is regained, here it is the manipulation of space using everyday objects that allows Apollinaire to protect his selfhood; or, in Barthes’s terms, that allows ‘une sorte d’échappée de l’objet vers l’infiniment subjectif’.<sup>17</sup> The narrational neutrality of those seemingly detached directions to the reader (‘par l’issue’ ‘en regardant la paroi adverse’, ‘on voit à gauche et à droit’, ‘mais en deçà de l’issue’, ‘à côté de l’issue’) may have appeared to subscribe to a sensory hierarchy dominated by vision, but as the reader is more fully immersed in Apollinaire’s interpretative space they

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<sup>16</sup> Harrow, *The Material, the Real, and the Fractured Self*, pp. 62-71.

<sup>17</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘Sémantique de l’objet’, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), p. 17.



realise that it is through the everyday objects of the dugout invested with new meaning, and how they alter the haptic experience of moving through and being in the space, that subjectivity is affirmed.

The candle becomes for Apollinaire a material object that mediates between the making of the self and the alien world of modern warfare. Yet when Apollinaire describes the swirling flames and smoke as ‘inséparable de ce qu’il dévore’, he draws attention to what Harrow terms the fragility of this ‘seam of contact’ between the self and the outside or material world.<sup>18</sup> Our first instinct is to read the poetic capturing of a material thing in motion (‘il dévore’) as confirmation of Barthes’s insistence on the transitive relation between objects and their users: the fire is burnt purely for Apollinaire’s intended use.<sup>19</sup> However, when compared to Fernand Léger’s *Les Fumeurs* (1911, see Appendix 3), the transitive nature of such materials – their capacity to burn, decay, deteriorate – takes on new meaning. At first glance, Léger’s painting appears to be a celebration of volumetric strength and depth: alongside the planes of colour and fragmented shapes that make up the bodies of the two smokers and the houses and trees of the landscape they are in, the smoke is endowed with a solidity that defies its transitive, material nature. Yet while the bright white of the plume to the left clearly demarcates the smoke from the left body, the pale grey of the plume which passes in front of both faces resembles their colour and form. The smoke now dissolves the boundaries not only between the smoking bodies, but between them and their surroundings.<sup>20</sup> Solidity is displaced by a sense of dynamism which not only reminds the viewer of the instability and immateriality of smoke, but now confers these qualities onto the

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<sup>18</sup> Harrow, *The Material, the Real, and the Fractured Self*, p. 94.

<sup>19</sup> Barthes, ‘Sémantique de l’objet’.

<sup>20</sup> Willard Bohn, *Modern Visual Poetry* (University of Delaware Press, 2001), p. 101. Bohn also notes that Apollinaire praised Léger’s *Les Fumeurs* (which he called *Le Fumeur*) in *Les Peintres cubistes*.

human bodies in the painting. How, then, does this tension between materiality and immateriality affect the affirmation of subjectivity that Harrow reads in Apollinaire's negotiation with material objects in 'Le Palais du tonnerre'? For if Léger uses the motif of smoke to threaten the dissolution of corporeality, can Apollinaire now be read as using the motif of smoke to expose an anxiety around the stability of the self, faced with the uncertainty and insecurity of modern warfare? Before, his breathless tour through the trench, referencing object after object in obsessive detail, seemed to illustrate the adaptation of space to nourish a sense of familiarity and comfort; a personal and lived haptic place.<sup>21</sup> Yet now it can also be read as a splintering of the self; Apollinaire's subjectivity is invested and dispersed in multiple objects that become 'stand-ins' for a coherent or stable whole. This slippery grasp on selfhood is emphasised two-fold by Apollinaire's description of the candle's flame as a 'flamme aussi petite qu'une souris'. By seeking to undo the devouring of materials and refashion the transitive, burning object into something resolutely living and tactile, Apollinaire seeks to collapse both the material and temporal fear of transitivity: not only the fear of the dissolution of the body and the self, but also its inevitability, referring to the transitory and fleeting nature of existence so heightened in the time of conflict. His surreal simile reflects his awareness of the ultimate futility of this quest; in hesitating to go as far as metaphor, the fragility of the grip between Apollinaire's contested self and the world, under the pressure of war, is fully revealed.

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<sup>21</sup> I am drawing on Rodaway's distinction between space and place, in line the accepted distinction in the field of cultural geography: space is somewhere more abstract and undefined, while place refers to how people are aware of, attracted to, or invest subjective meaning in a certain piece of space. Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies*, pp. 42-48.

In the personal and private space of the dugout, the fragile relationship between the self and the uncertain world of modern warfare is mediated through haptic experience. The altered coordinates of the dugout provoke the reader to ask how such objects affect how one moves through and constructs a sense of place; in short, how the self meets the world. It is then the complex haptic quality of the materiality and transitivity of the smoke that, in staging a play between creation and dissolution, presence and absence, marks the shifting and fragile nature of Apollinaire's selfhood in this environment. In a passage from a letter sent on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1915, the concept of a 'haptic geography' can be developed further to understand how Apollinaire imagines the body of his absent lover. As Apollinaire shifts from describing the environment to imagining Madeleine's body in the epistolary form, he is marked by the same tension between the material and the immaterial that pervaded 'Le Palais du tonnerre':

Et te voilà nue devant moi comme Ève devant Adam ! Et tu me découvres l'âme le cœur et le corps. Veux-tu que je t'enlace encore, ô mon lys, dans ta nudité ? Je sens que ton torse cette fleur jaillie du calice exquis du giron et des lombes, ton torse aux deux fleurs qui boutonnent sur ton sein, ton torse se renverse pâmé sur mes bras qui t'entourent.<sup>22</sup>

Imagining their future erotic encounter, Apollinaire's desire for Madeleine unfurls as a transformation of her body into a sensory landscape. Just as Apollinaire established and then undercut the visual coordinates of 'Le Palais du tonnerre', here the instruction to Madeleine to stand 'nue devant moi', to expose her naked skin for Apollinaire's examining and dominating gaze, is destabilised by the evocation of tactile and, more subtly, olfactory dimensions of desire (suggested by her body parts as 'lys', 'fleur' and 'deux fleurs'). The shift from 'découvrir' to 'enlacer' Madeleine's nakedness locates the imagination of touching skin at the source of this destabilisation: the visual snapshot of the skin exposing Madeleine's body

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<sup>22</sup> Apollinaire, '15 septembre 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, pp. 192-193.

in one swift movement gives way to a slower and more sensitive exploration of her skin, as if Apollinaire's hand is tracing the different shapes of her body, hovering tentatively over the erogenous zones imagined as flowers. By imagining Madeleine's body as a material world to be explored through touch, Apollinaire transforms her body into what we could call a new 'haptic geography' of desire. This geographical imagination of Madeleine's body filters through their entire correspondence, as Apollinaire describes Madeleine as 'mon oasis' in 'le désert', her hair either 'se déroulant comme les vagues de la mer quand souffle la tempête' or as a 'merveilleuse forêt vierge'.<sup>23</sup> But it is Madeleine's exposed skin which most powerfully prompts the sensory unfurling of Apollinaire's desire and the enrapture of his affective response: in imagining its feel as a physical landscape, Apollinaire transforms the skin into a map that guides him not just through his physical touch, but towards the metaphorical touch and so deeper understanding of her 'âme' and 'cœur', her selfhood.

Didier Anzieu's theory of the skin ego, reworking a Freudian model of the ego and the unconscious as inherently bodily, can help us to understand the primacy of skin and touch in the navigation of the self. Jay Prosser clearly summarises Anzieu's concept as follows:

[Anzieu's] concept of the 'skin ego' takes the body's physical skin as the primary organ underlying the formation of the ego, its handling, its touching, its holding – our experience of its feel – individualising our psychic functioning, quite crucially making us who we are [...] It holds each of us together, quite literally contains us, protects us, keeps us discrete.<sup>24</sup>

For Anzieu, the skin is an essential constituent of a complete individuality. It encloses the body in its entirety, forming a boundary of identification with the other that allows the discrete self to emerge. But it also becomes a figurative or metaphorical skin; a way of thinking about how

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<sup>23</sup> Apollinaire, '24 septembre 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 225; '19 octobre 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 304; '3 octobre 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 243.

<sup>24</sup> Cited in Imogen Tyler, 'Skin-tight: Celebrity, Pregnancy and Subjectivity' in Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey (eds.), *Thinking Through the Skin* (London: Routledge, 2003) p. 72.

the experience of touch feels, and how these feelings are connected to the sensations on the surface of the body.<sup>25</sup> When Garrington argues, in her study *Haptic Modernism*, that the skin is the most conspicuous representative of the touching body, she implies that the skin becomes the site of encounter, the point of contact, between the body and the world.<sup>26</sup> Here, understanding the geographical imagination of Madeleine's skin alongside Anzieu's theory of the skin ego allows us to go a step further. The mapping of Madeleine's skin allows Apollinaire to understand her self, but also to reflect on how his own subjectivity is mediated through material sensation. As a result, the skin becomes a point of contact not solely between body and world, or body and body; but between self and other. When Apollinaire imagines the feel of the weight of Madeleine's body ('ton torse se renverse pâmé sur mes bras qui t'entourent'), this point of contact has transcended the material distance between him and Madeleine and forged a productive encounter of their selves.

A comparison of the tactile mapping of Madeleine's skin to a further and more challenging instance of the intermingling of haptic and olfactory sensation in Apollinaire's poem 'Fumées', however, problematises what this secondary instance of exploring a 'haptic geography' can reveal about Apollinaire's construction of the epistolary self (see Appendix 4). In 'Fumées', Apollinaire filters out the now familiar bloodshed of the battlefield, documented unflinchingly to open the poem by a regimented internal half and full rhyme ('tandis'/'ensanglante', 'guerre'/'terre'), by the action of lighting a cigarette.<sup>27</sup> As the curving

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<sup>25</sup> helps to explain how the skin operates on both physical and figurative levels: he writes that the figurative skin 'becomes, in other words, a way of thinking about the experience of the senses – about how they feel – and how this feeling grows out of or, indeed, latches onto, the sensations springing from the surface of the body'. Marc Lafrance, 'From the Skin Ego to the Psychic Envelope: An Introduction to the Work of Didier Anzieu' in Sheila L. Cavanagh, Angela Failler and Rachel Alpha Johnston Hurst (eds.), *Skin, Culture and Psychoanalysis* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 31.

<sup>26</sup> Garrington, *Haptic Modernism*, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup> Apollinaire, 'Fumées', *Calligrammes*, p. 96.

pattern of the pipe climbs up the page, the unravelling of the real, material, and collective experience of warfare is borne out in the synesthetic unravelling of physical sensation:

Des fleurs à ras du sol regardent par bouffées  
Les boucles des odeurs par tes main décoiffées

Although Anne Hyde Greet and S. Lockerbie read these lines as fusing smell and sight, when we consider the use of smoke in 'Le Palais du tonnerre' and the overlap of the haptic and olfactory in the passage from the letters above, the tobacco in fact grants Apollinaire an escape into a private and sensuous 'zone' of desire that is marked by an expansion of the capacity of touch: his lover is now able to tousle or grasp the smells.<sup>28</sup> Connor's theorisation of skin as materially comparable to smoke can help us to interpret the significance of this tactile transformation. Connor draws on Serres's conceptualisation of skin as a 'milieu' to challenge the predominating metaphor of skin as a lining or a surface – or, as above, a sort of external map of the body guiding Apollinaire to Madeleine's exposed soul. Serres argues that:

[...] in the skin, through the skin, the world and the body touch, defining their common border. Contingency means mutual touching: world and body meet and caress in the skin [...] the skin intervenes in the things of the world and brings about their mingling.<sup>29</sup>

Connor destabilises the idea of the skin as a fixed point of contact: he explains Serres's conceptualisation of the intervening and intermingling nature of skin as its 'implicative capacity': an ability to fold in on itself and become simultaneously inside and outside, foreground and background, matter and image. Skin therefore becomes a 'much more mobile and ambivalent substance [...] which [does] not have simple superficiality of absolute homogeneity, but in which, so to speak, the surface turns in on itself, goes all the way down',

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<sup>28</sup> Apollinaire, *Calligrammes* trans. by Anne Hyde Greet, p. 408. S. Lockerbie provides comments with Hyde Greet on the fusion of sight and smell.

<sup>29</sup> Cited in Connor, *The Book of Skin*, p. 28.

just like substances such as ‘smoke; clouds; dust; sand; foam’.<sup>30</sup> What impact does this drawing of a connection between skin and smoke have on the relationship between skin and selfhood? The conceptualisation of Madeleine’s skin as a map with both physical, external and metaphorical, internal coordinates subscribes to Anzieu’s understanding of the skin as a container for protecting and keeping discrete our sense of self. Yet this ‘implicative capacity’ of the skin forces a reminder not only of the ever-active and ever-shifting flows between the body and the world, but of the shock of the bilateral and contradictory nature of the skin: when the person touching feels both the surface of an object, or another person’s skin, they also feel their *own* skin in return.<sup>31</sup> It forces a reckoning of a self that is in constant readjustment. Connor’s connection between skin and smoke opens up the possibility of a questioning and conflicted self.

A theoretical mirroring therefore occurs between the poem and the passage from the letter, that can help us to understand the epistolary self. In ‘Fumées’, the smoke of the cigarette can be understood in terms of a skin that fosters an intermingling between the imaginative and the material. On one hand, the smoke, like skin, goes beyond being a two-dimensional surface onto which Apollinaire projects the image of Madeleine; it becomes a sort of mirage, endlessly refracting Apollinaire’s innermost desires in a phantasmagorical zone operating at a slight remove from his immediate surroundings. His image of hands grasping smells marks the transgressive and revolutionary potential of this space: he has pushed the

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<sup>30</sup> Connor, *The Book of Skin*, p. 40.

<sup>31</sup> Ian Maclachlan explains this self-reflexive touch in reference to Derrida’s formulation ‘se toucher toi’: unpicking what Derrida means, he writes that ‘in touching you I must also feel myself touching you: I must self-touch you.’ When Apollinaire imagines touching Madeleine’s skin, he also interrogates how the act of touch loops back to his own subjectivity, or an awareness of his self. This will be explored in more detail later in this chapter. Ian Maclachlan, ‘Long Distance Love: On Remote Sensing in Shakespeare’s Sonnet 109’ in Michael Syrotinski and Ian Maclachlan (eds.), *Sensual Reading: New Approaches to Reading in Its Relation to the Senses* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2001), p. 58.

capacity of touch to blur the boundary between self and world, and self and other, as if reality has turned in on itself. On the other hand, the comparison of skin and smoke calls attention to the bilateral nature of the shape of the calligramme: as a visualisation of what it describes, it intrudes onto the page to problematise the smoke's total dissolution of reality. The play between inside and outside, foreground and background, matter and image, therefore reminds the reader that Apollinaire is not merely imagining a lover into existence; he is remembering the *real* body of Madeleine, distanced by the war that bloodies the earth between them. The conceptualisation of extended physical touch reaches its limit: Apollinaire can remember his lover's touch, but in war can never be rewarded with the reciprocal contact or grasp that he craves. Torn between his imagination and his material reality, Apollinaire's self is exposed, as mobile and ambivalent as the smoke he describes.

In the passage from Apollinaire's letter of 15<sup>th</sup> September 1915, then, skin can now be understood in terms of smoke. Apollinaire's imagination of Madeleine's skin as if it is a physical landscape therefore suggests a desire to give solid shape and form to the smoke-like presence – ambivalent, transitory, and difficult to grasp – of her in his memory, a desire to rewrite Madeleine's corporeal absence as still rooted in the material world. Apollinaire's shifting use of tenses and modes to imagine different ways of touching Madeleine now suggests a sense of distance, unattainability, and anxiety in the multisensory image of grasping for smells: the pejorative confidence of 'et toi voilà nue devant moi' mutates first to the more nervous interrogative 'veux-tu que je t'enlace [...] ?', before giving way to the present tense 'ton torse se renverse'.<sup>32</sup> The temporal and spatial disjuncture of this last

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<sup>32</sup> Apollinaire also goes through different layers of haptic experience in these quotations: Madeleine standing before him refers to a proprioceptive impression of Apollinaire's position in space relating to her body, embracing Madeleine refers to cutaneous contact, or the skin-to-skin encounter, and feeling the weight of Madeleine in his arms incorporates both the kinaesthetic and vestibular dimensions of touch.



alteration is particularly startling. The immediacy of the skin-to-skin encounter, textured by the other layers of the haptic as Apollinaire imagines the weight of Madeleine's body and his own altered balance and perception of space, is problematised as Apollinaire retreats into a present tense that paradoxically denies immediacy: it reminds the reader again that Apollinaire is only imagining, in the writing present and at a distance, Madeleine's real touch. When Connor explored the 'implicative capacity' of smoke-like skin, drawing on Serres's conceptualisation of the skin as the mutual touching of body and world, he highlighted the sensation of one feeling one's own skin as it touches the skin or surface of another person or object. The reflexive jolt of this action can help us to understand Apollinaire's disjuncture: it transforms the skin into an unexpected layer of resistance or intervention. In the words of Sarah Jackson, exploring the dialogic exchange with the other and the world in *Tactile Poetics*, the skin therefore becomes both a point of contact *and* a point of rupture.<sup>33</sup> Imagining Madeleine's skin from a distance, Apollinaire is forced to confront this complex nature of touching: when he writes that he feels Madeleine's 'torse se renverse[r]', imagining in the writing present a future tactile encounter, he too grapples with the contact and rupture, the sort of intimate separation, at the heart of touch. When Apollinaire imagined Madeleine's naked skin '[se découvrent] l'âme le cœur et le corps', he desperately sought the 'philosophical verification', 'intimacy' and 'sense of shared vulnerability' that Paterson and Shildrick, at the beginning of this chapter, attributed to the touch of another body. But when he imagined a broader haptic encounter (touching the body, feeling its weight in his arms) and recognised that this imagined sensory experience could not compensate for Madeleine's corporeal absence, Apollinaire's writing therefore opened up new ways of understanding the

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<sup>33</sup> Sarah Jackson, *Tactile Poetics: Touch and Contemporary Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), p. 3.

skin, and touch itself, that highlight separation. In doing so, Apollinaire reveals the philosophical contradiction, isolation, and vulnerability that pervades the self as it imagines the touch of their remote lover. Where 'Fumées' began to probe the complexities of the memory of touch, it is the epistolary form that brings into such sharp relief the tangled relationship between self and other, and the conflict of the self that in feeling its own touch, feels its own capacity to be made and unmade, to make contact and to rupture.

In 'Palais du tonnerre', Apollinaire's haptic encounter with the world of the trenches – how the self touches, moves through, and invests itself in material objects – revealed a fundamentally unstable sense of self. This is reinforced further when the imagined physical and metaphorical touch of the absent Madeleine exposes the conflict between intimacy and distance, contact and rupture, inherent to the epistolary relationship. To conclude this chapter, how do these strands of constructing the self – in relation to material objects, and in relation to the distant other – come together in the complex materiality of the letter itself? How does the letter cement the specificity of Apollinaire's epistolary self? Apollinaire's letter of 28<sup>th</sup> May 1915 contains a series of meditations on epistolary contact mediated by the haptic. Only six weeks into their epistolary courtship, Apollinaire opens the letter with a terse rebuttal of a parcel of 'douceurs' that Madeleine had previously sent, instructing her: 'écrivez-moi, car ce sera de vous et ce que je préfère c'est vous avec votre grave beauté qui me donne une si brusque et si tendre et si douloureuse nostalgie quand j'y pense'.<sup>34</sup> Writing on eighteenth-century women letter-writers, Terry Eagleton uses a corporeal and haptic metaphor to theorise the significance of the letter object which can help us to interpret

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<sup>34</sup> Apollinaire, '28 mai 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, pp. 54-55.

Apollinaire's affective response: he writes that the letter is 'that part of the body which is detachable: torn from the very depths of your subject'.<sup>35</sup> It is Apollinaire's yearning for the 'si tendre et si douloureuse' metaphorical touch of Madeleine's letters that distinguishes them from the parcels of sweets: the letters are invested with the subjective meaning and emotional weight of the objects described in 'Le Palais du tonnerre', reaching into the 'depths' of Madeleine's subject to touch the 'very depths' of Apollinaire's. Apollinaire then goes on to write that he has enclosed an engraved 'petite bague', that he has made just for Madeleine.<sup>36</sup> He creates a material object that incorporates physical touch too: his engraving retains the trace and imprint of his physical contact, forging a connection between his and Madeleine's hands as she will then wear the ring he has created. The ring almost becomes a 'detachable' part of his body.

To end the letter, Apollinaire encloses a poem that suggests the blurring of these instances of physical and metaphorical touch, of the self and the material object, and of the self and other, in the process of writing a letter (see Appendix 5). Retaining the overlap between skin and smoke explored thus far, he writes:

Tandis que les volutes bleuâtres qui montent d'un cigare écrivent le plus tendre des noms Madeleine

Mais les nœuds de couleuvres en se dénouant écrivent aussi le nom émouvant Madeleine, dont chaque lettre se love en belle anglaise

Et le soldat n'ose point achever le jeu de mots bilingue que ne manque point de susciter cette calligraphie sylvestre et vernale.<sup>37</sup>

The rising 'volutés bleuâtres' here do not create an ambiguous, dream-like memory of Madeleine but rather rewrite her corporeal absence as a textual presence. The will to touch

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<sup>35</sup> Cited in Carolyn Steedman, 'A woman writing a letter' in Rebecca Earle (ed.), *Epistolary Selves*, p. 120.

<sup>36</sup> Apollinaire, '28 mai 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 55.

<sup>37</sup> Apollinaire, '28 mai 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, pp. 55-56.

unfolds in the emphasis of language and writing; in the subtle bilingual pun between love and 'se lover', the evocation of 'calligraphie', and finally the repetition of the present tense 'écrivent', as if Apollinaire desperately seeks to unite and capture the transitory moments of remembering Madeleine and of writing this letter – moments that in reality are only to be conveyed to the reader once they have passed.<sup>38</sup> Yet the evocation of 'calligraphie', connected to the spring woodland, also forges a link to the trace of physical touch in the engraved ring: it calls attention to the cutaneous contact in the act of writing. As Garrington carefully outlines in her study of Woolf's letters as emblematic of haptic modernism, when writing a letter, one hand is given over to the scriptive instrument, which caresses or stokes the page in its place, while another, possibly steadying, hand upon the paper keeps the unmediated human touch in play.<sup>39</sup> These traces of touch come into contact with the touch of the addressee when they open and grasp the letter themselves. The letters retain the trace of the skin at both ends of the epistolary tie to allow a caress between the writer and addressee at a distance.

The letters therefore go beyond material objects imbued with subjective meaning to offer a more nuanced blurring of self, other, and world. They act metaphorically as Apollinaire's second skin, recording the shifting facets of his self as he negotiates his wartime reality and seeks to 'keep in touch', to maintain the intimate separation with his distant lover. But they also carry a physical trace of this skin, a reminder of the reciprocal contact that sustains the epistolary relationship; the importance of which is eulogised by Woolf when she

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<sup>38</sup> Liz Stanley describes this as the 'perspectival nature' of letter writing: she explains that letters do not 'contain fixed material from one viewpoint' and 'that their structure and content changes according to the particular recipient and the passing of time. Letters fascinatingly take on the perspective of the 'moment' as this develops within a letter or a sequence of letters'. Stanley, 'The Epistolarium', pp. 202-203.

<sup>39</sup> Abbie Garrington, 'The Line that Binds: Climbing Narratives, Ropework and Epistolary Practice' in Julie Taylor (ed.), *Modernism and Affect* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 75-93.

claims that 'without someone warm and breathing on the other side of the page, letters are worthless'.<sup>40</sup> When Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey read the tactile exchange in writing as the point where skin and writing overlap, their concluding comments can be used to summarise how the exploration of skin can reveal the complexities of epistolary contact: for them, both writing and skin 'involve materiality and signification, limits and possibilities, thought and affect, difference and identity'.<sup>41</sup> As the writing of Madeleine's name disappears in the dissipation of smoke, we can add to this list the contact and rupture inherent in the skin-to-skin encounter. The relationship between smoke and skin that I have traced as a means of exploring the touching, and touched, epistolary self in Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine now reveals how the letters are the site where the self, other, and material world collide in new and challenging ways. The self comes out of these haptic encounters as mobile and ambivalent, anxious and unresolved; but fundamentally rooted in, shaped by, and open to further sensory encounters with the other and the world.

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<sup>40</sup> Cited in Garrington, 'The Line that Binds', p. 78.

<sup>41</sup> Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey, 'Introduction: Dermographies' in Ahmed and Stacey (eds.), *Thinking Through the Skin*, p. 15.

## Chapter Two

### ‘Entraîles’ Exposed: Taste and Smell

As Apollinaire and Madeleine’s epistolary relationship develops over 1915, Apollinaire’s desire for his lover’s physical touch is at its most intense when he receives a material trace of her body. On 23<sup>rd</sup> August, he is captivated by a lock of Madeleine’s fragranced hair that accompanies her letter:

Ma très chérie, [dans] la lettre du 17 les cheveux sentaient adorablement la rose [...] et cette saveur de fleur fruitée je la goûte inimaginablement en songeant à vos lèvres.<sup>1</sup>

Then, only two weeks later, Madeleine sends him a sweet that she had already bitten into:

J’ai eu aujourd’hui, mon amour, une fête extraordinaire [...] ce bonbon de miel où étaient encore les traces divines de tes dents et cet admirable baiser inventé par toi [...] j’en ai eu presque des spasmes de volupté.<sup>2</sup>

In the first chapter of this thesis, we saw that the haptic in Apollinaire’s letters negotiated multiple crossings of a fragile seam of contact between self, other, and the material world. Apollinaire’s interchange between skin and smoke revealed a web of tensions exposing the vulnerability of Apollinaire’s epistolary self: between physical and metaphorical touch, presence and absence, contact and rupture. These tensions collided most compellingly in the object of the letter itself, as Apollinaire’s imagined traversal of temporal and spatial distance was problematised by the material complexity of the epistolary form. The two quotations above, however, show sensory experiences that go beyond the skin boundary: tasting and smelling. This chapter will explore how Apollinaire imagines overcoming the frustrations and

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<sup>1</sup> Apollinaire, ‘23 août 1915’, *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Apollinaire, ‘12 septembre 1915’, *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 179.

impossibilities of epistolary contact, by engaging with the crossing of the skin threshold inherent in tasting and smelling the world around him, and the body of the other. How does Apollinaire use these sensory experiences to explore the wider theme of the transgression of bodily boundaries? How do the problems and possibilities associated with this transgression challenge our understanding of Apollinaire's epistolary self?

The two quotations above can help us first to establish a theoretical framework for our analysis of taste and smell in Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine. In the first quotation, Apollinaire writes a four-part olfactory narrative: the sentence begins with Apollinaire recognising and then naming the smell of the rose ('les cheveux sentaient adorablement la rose'), before he moves out of this descriptive mode to evoke the savouring of its flavour, which allows him finally to dream of Madeleine's lips. On first reading, such a shift towards desire-fuelled pleasure plays into the critical opinion that has previously dominated the philosophical approach to smell: Hegel, for example, wrote that 'smell, taste, and touch have to do with matter as such and its immediately sensuous qualities'.<sup>3</sup> In other words, smell has less to do with aesthetics or knowledge, and more to do with pleasure and hedonism. Hegel's theoretical dismissal is in fact bolstered by the cultural history of smell in nineteenth-century France: participating in a movement alongside Jonathan Reinartz, Howes and Classen to historicise smell as a valid marker of the perception of social, political, and cultural change, Alain Corbin traces the eradication of smells connected with death and impermanence as part

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<sup>3</sup> Cited in Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 58.

of the construction of bourgeois experience.<sup>4</sup> The marginalisation of smell therefore has philosophical, historical, and cultural origins.

Yet, disrupting the flow of Apollinaire's smelling narrative is a tension between the 'inimaginable' taste of the sweet and the specific imagination of Madeleine's lips. Laura Marks's article 'Thinking Multisensory Culture', at the forefront of recent critical efforts to counter the marginalisation of smell and readdress its affective potential, can help us to understand Apollinaire's response.<sup>5</sup> Marks traces how the physiological act of smelling establishes what she terms the 'olfactory imaginary': the 'wiring' of olfaction is directly linked to neural centres for emotion and memory before connecting to cognition, thus ensuring an association of odour with emotionally intense experiences. When Apollinaire describes the smell of the rose as 'inimaginable', he taps into the difficulty of coding and communicating the affective force of these personal sensory experiences. When he then specifies Madeleine's lips, isolating a sexualised body part, this experience takes shape as an imagination of a future physical encounter, as a shift into a private realm of desire. Smelling therefore reveals itself as able to elicit intimate, emotionally charged responses that go beyond pure pleasure or hedonism. Marks concludes that 'cultivated odors operate across a membrane from the material to the symbolic', thus articulating how the act of smelling facilitates a movement inwards: it becomes a means of engaging with the material world that prioritises subjective experience.

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<sup>4</sup> Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); Jonathon Reinartz, *Past Scents: Historical Perspectives on Smell* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014); Classen, Howes, and Synott (eds.), *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*.

<sup>5</sup> Laura Marks, 'Thinking Multisensory Culture', *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory*, 31 (2008), 123-137.



When Apollinaire describes tasting ('goûter') the flavour of the rose, he seems to stretch Marks's terminology to accommodate a 'gustatory imagination' too. However, the use of taste in the second quotation above challenges Marks's insistence on a one-way traffic from the material to the symbolic in the proximal sense experience. Where before Apollinaire could only dream of Madeleine's lips, here, in eating the honey bonbon imprinted by Madeleine's real teeth, he articulates the encounter as a concrete 'baiser inventé par toi'. Madeleine's mouth is transformed from a distant, atomised body part to one that, through the bitten imprint, facilitates a kind of physical encounter with Apollinaire's own body. Apollinaire's response is transformed too: he registers his desire not by the emotionally charged 'songer', but by the affective bodily response of being thrown into uncontrollable 'spasmes de volupté'. He has rooted his subjective experience firmly in relation to both the material world and the materiality of his own body as he perceives it.

Philosopher Carolyn Korsmeyer's exploration of the dual nature of gustatory and olfactory experiences can help us to understand how Apollinaire's responses to smell and taste are linked in these passages.<sup>6</sup> Participating in the same critical resurgence as Marks, Korsmeyer calls for the recovery of the sensation of tasting in food studies, a field that has been dominated and delimited by attention to either taste as solely a metaphor of aesthetic judgement (as Erica Fretwell discovers in nineteenth-century accounts of sensory perception, 'the tongue' has 'no place in the philosophy of taste'), to 'acts of eating' that focus on the socially unifying aspects of a meal rather than the material pleasures of the food itself, or to the historical-geographical specificity of food in the construction of national identity.<sup>7</sup> Arguing

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<sup>6</sup> Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste*, pp. 1-11.

<sup>7</sup> Erica Fretwell cited in Michelle Coghlan, 'Tasting Modernism: An Introduction', *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*, 2 (2014), 1-10 (p. 3). For examples of studies that approach taste in terms of social, historical, or geographical context or significance, see: Jennifer Fleissner, 'Henry James and the Art of Eating', *ELH*, 75 (2008), 27-62 and Denise Gigante, *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

that oral sense experience should be understood as embodied, Korsemeier explains that taste and smell simultaneously direct attention both inwards to the state of one's body, including the tongue, mouth, nose, throat, and elements of the digestive system, and outwards to the item incorporated, the object in the external world that one takes into one's mouth or that one smells. As the subject and object are incorporated they become blurred: the thresholds between the perceiving body and the perceived material world are thus opened and destabilised.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the uncontrollable nature of Apollinaire's 'spasmes de volupté' suggestively tie the subjective response governed by desire, memory, and emotion to the destabilisation of corporeal boundaries inherent in the act of ingestion and inhalation.

Another leading voice in the study of taste as a material sensation, Deane Curtin, clearly expresses the consequences of this evolving relationship between sensation, embodiment, and materiality for subjectivity when he claims that 'to account for our openness to food requires a relational concept of the self'.<sup>9</sup> The tasting and smelling body paves the way for a self that is constantly forced to confront and redefine its relationship to the material world. Gustatory and olfactory experiences open a channel to the emotions, memories, and desires that the self navigates as it moves through the world and encounters others within it. The corporeal nature of these subjective encounters ensures that the thresholds of the tasting and smelling self are also destabilised and made vulnerable: they incorporate the object, or the other, into their very being. We can recall that in Chapter One of this thesis, Shildrick defined the touching self as operating within a space of 'shared

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<sup>8</sup> See also, Cecilia Novero, *Antidiets of the Avant-Garde: From Futurist Cooking to Eat Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010) and Michel Delville, *Food, Poetry, and the Aesthetics of Consumption: Eating the Avant-Garde* (New York: Routledge, 2008) for further discussions on the opening and destabilisation of thresholds between the self and other in the act of eating.

<sup>9</sup> Deane Curtin, 'Food/Body/Person' in Deane Curtin and Lisa Maree Heldke (eds.), *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992) p. 11.

vulnerability', where 'exposure to, and immersion in, the world of others' exposed a 'capacity to be moved beyond reason'.<sup>10</sup> It was through the complexity of the skin-to-skin encounter, alongside the kinaesthetic, vestibular, and proprioceptive capacity of the body, that Apollinaire was touched in diverging ways by both the material conditions of modern warfare and Madeleine's problematic presence at the other end of the epistolary tie. Here, the tasting and smelling self willingly broaches corporeal boundaries to facilitate a constant exchange between the exterior world and the interior of the body and self. How does this crossing of thresholds reshape the coordinates of the shared space of vulnerability? How does the imagination and representation of such crossings become a framework for Apollinaire's construction of the epistolary self? Finally, how does this challenge our understanding of the letters as a space of shared vulnerability? It is the ability for taste and smell to be both objective and subjective, both material and symbolic, as their experiences cross corporeal boundaries, that will guide the exploration of the shifting coordinates between the tasting and smelling self, Madeleine, and the world in this chapter.

When Apollinaire smelled Madeleine's lock of hair and tasted the sweet bearing the imprint of her teeth, he escaped into a space of sensory imagination and desire. Although this was registered as an affective response, rooted in the materiality of Apollinaire's perceiving body, these sensory encounters lifted Apollinaire out of the material reality of his wartime conditions. But how is this desire for escape shaped by Apollinaire's olfactory and gustatory impressions of his life in the trenches? Passages sent in letters of 2<sup>nd</sup> July and 5<sup>th</sup> May 1915 can help us to explore how Apollinaire's relationship to the world is mediated through smell

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<sup>10</sup> Margrit Shildrick, 'Some Speculations on Matters of Touch', p. 402.

and taste. Responding to the exposed, rotting flesh of corpses on the battlefield, Apollinaire writes: 'L'ombre est de chairs putréfiées les arbres si rares sont des morts restés debout'.<sup>11</sup> The exposure of the interior of the body, in the form of putrefying flesh, sparks for Apollinaire a blurring between presence and absence, life and death, that is borne out in the confusing interplay between trees, corpses, and still living soldiers: 'l'ombre', a shadow or shade implying the covering of a space, is countered by 'rare'; living, vertical 'arbres' are countered by 'morts' that are unexpectedly also 'debout'. Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject, hinging on the relationship between bodily margins and subjectivity, can help us to understand how the transgression of corporeal boundaries in the rotting corpse causes Apollinaire's disordered written response. Kristeva formulates the abject as an experience of revulsion towards expelled or excreted bodily matter and fluid which confounds the distinction between a body's inside and outside; such materials are excluded in the process of constituting one's subject, yet can never be got rid of, hovering at the 'limites de ma condition de vivant'.<sup>12</sup> This reaches a horrifying climax in the corpse, where these bodily materials are all excluded 'jusqu'à ce que, de perte en perte, il ne m'en reste rien, et que mon corps tombe tout entier au-delà la limite'.<sup>13</sup> The corpse marks the presence of death infecting life: exposure to it forces one to confront the materiality of one's body, and the inevitability of one's own death, their own 'limite'. We have seen that smell, too, involves a crossing of bodily thresholds, a passage between the inside and the outside of the body that forces the self to reconsider its relationship to materiality. How, then, does smell prompt Apollinaire's loss of ability to make sense of the world – to categorise, order, or explain it – faced with the abject sight of battlefield flesh and corpses? The adjective 'putréfiées' transforms the visual 'ombre'

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<sup>11</sup> Apollinaire, '2 juillet 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 81.

<sup>12</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Pouvoirs de l'Horreur: Essai sur l'Abjection* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1980), p.11.

<sup>13</sup> Kristeva, *Pouvoirs de l'Horreur*, p. 11.

into a visceral multi-sensory jolt: it causes the reader to flinch or recoil as they imagine not only the visual spread of decay but also its smell. As Apollinaire faces his own mortality in the image of 'des morts restés debout', this smell takes on a further oppressive quality: the evocation that the boundary between life and death is ever-present and ever-permeable transforms that visceral jolt of 'putréfiées', of a shocking smell that lasts for one reflexive and affective moment, into a lingering unease that suggests a pollution by proximity or contact. The living soldiers, or Apollinaire himself, could be engulfed by the smell not only of others but of their own putrefying flesh at any moment.<sup>14</sup> In forcing him to confront the dissolution of boundaries between the inside and the outside of the body, the smell takes Apollinaire to the border of his own 'condition de vivant', to the precipice of falling beyond his own 'limite'. As the putrefying flesh spills over its defined skin boundary, its smell has seeped through Apollinaire's skin boundary to force a confrontation with his own mortality.

The exposed, rotting flesh on the battlefield sparked a fear over the dissolution of corporeal boundaries for Apollinaire that is mediated by the olfactory: in smelling the flesh, Apollinaire was confronted by the permeation of his own boundaries, and so his own impermanence. In a letter of 5<sup>th</sup> May 1915, Apollinaire's invocation of the 'gustatory imagination' not only deepens these fears, but also articulates how they impact his construction of the self. Rather than describing trees as 'des morts restés debout', here he writes that they are: 'brises mâchées pour ainsi dire comme de mon temps les porte-plume

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<sup>14</sup> In *The Anatomy of Disgust*, William Miller incorporates this sense of lingering into an exploration of disgust as not a hard-wired reflex, as proposed by most psychological and psychoanalytical theory, but as an emotion that is bound up with subjectivity. Disgust's various manifestations, for Miller, 'all convey a strong sense of aversion to something perceived as dangerous because of its powers to contaminate, infect, or pollute by proximity, contact, or ingestion'. Miller's analysis helps us to understand why Apollinaire feels so strongly the sense of his own mortality: the smell provokes a disgusted reaction because it can fill Apollinaire's own body at any moment just by being near him. William Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 2.

des écoliers.’<sup>15</sup> On first reading, Apollinaire appears to be again seeking an escape from the reality of warfare by comparing the trees, misshapen by the conflict, to the chewed penholders of his childhood: signalled by the nostalgic turn of phrase ‘de mon temps’, the reader is transported back to the specific and safe space of the classroom. The evocation of ‘mâchés’ therefore recalls the ability of a taste to trigger a unique memory, to deliver a moment of temporal discontinuity as one recalls a past feeling or emotion. This personal sense impression is, however, undercut when we look closer at the act of chewing the end of a penholder as an unthinking, unconscious act. The simile now takes on a more sinister meaning: it transforms war itself into an indiscriminate agent, chewing up both the landscape and, if we recall the interchange of trees and bodies in the quotation above, the bodies of soldiers.<sup>16</sup> In the act of smelling, Apollinaire was confronted with the potential dissolution of his own corporeal boundaries because of the expulsion of the inside of the body (‘chairs putréfiées’). Here, ‘mâchés’ suggests the possibility of *his* movement inside the body of a personified trench. By tying the threat of modern warfare to his desired retreat into the past, Apollinaire plays on the further meaning of ‘mâchés’ as mashed or mixed up to articulate the fear of himself becoming the chewed object, of himself losing his footing in the present. He has flipped from the chewing subject, in his memory, to the potential chewed object in his present and future material reality.

In Apollinaire’s provocative poem ‘Merveille de la guerre’, he too imagines the trench as a personified chewer (see Appendix 6):

Il me semble assister à un grand festin éclairé a giorno  
C’est un banquet que s’offre la terre

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<sup>15</sup> Apollinaire, ‘5 mai 1915’, *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> Das explores the personification of the trench as a stomach in *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*, pp. 73-106

Elle a faim et ouvre de longues bouches pâles

[...]

Je suis dans la tranchée de première ligne et cependant je suis partout ou plutôt je commence à être partout

C'est moi qui commence cette chose des siècles à venir<sup>17</sup>

Here, Apollinaire uses the chewing and digesting earth as part of a narrative schema that sees the war as a celebration of modernist values, an iconoclastic event that will pave the way for a transfigured future.<sup>18</sup> Mathews reminds us that this event equally serves as an initiation ceremony for a transformed self, mythologised in the second half of the poem as a new visionary who is capable of seeing beyond the destructive reality of the current conflict to a bright, modernist future.<sup>19</sup> When Apollinaire evokes the chewed pencil holders of his schooldays, using the gustatory imagination to seek an escape into a safer past, he seems to have begun a retreat from this affirmatory position. It is problematised even further when, in a letter of 1<sup>st</sup> July 1915, Apollinaire describes the subterranean environment of the trenches as follows:

Nous sommes tombés dans un lieu sinistre où à toutes les horreurs de la guerre, l'horreur du site, l'abondance épouvantable des cimetières se joignent la privation d'arbres, d'eau, de véritable terre même. Si nous restons longtemps ici, je me demande ce que nous deviendrons hors la mort par les instruments guerriers.<sup>20</sup>

As Apollinaire imagines descending into the bowels of the personified earth, the representation of time takes on a vertiginous quality. Finding himself at terrifying proximity to his fallen comrades, Apollinaire's pace quickens: the repetition of 'horreur' and the listing of absent markers of the landscape ('d'arbres, d'eau, de véritable terre même') recreates his

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<sup>17</sup> Apollinaire, 'Merveille de la guerre', *Calligrammes*, pp. 157-158.

<sup>18</sup> Apollinaire, *Calligrammes* trans. by Anne Hyde Greet, p. 505. For a similar interpretation, see also: Tony Hoagland, 'I Seem to Be at a Great Feast: The War Poems of Guillaume Apollinaire', *The American Poetry Review*, 43 (2014).

<sup>19</sup> Mathews, *Reading Apollinaire*, p. 222.

<sup>20</sup> Apollinaire, '1 juillet 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, pp. 76-77.

growing panic of being trapped 'longtemps' underground. The imagined crossing of the earth's bodily thresholds has therefore led to a fear of dissolution ('je me demande ce que nous deviendrons') caused by being static and immobile. Later in the letter, he mirrors this fear by writing that 'l'horreur des déserts' turns soldiers into 'ermites'.<sup>21</sup> The flipping of agency from Apollinaire as chewing subject to chewed, digested object is revealed in the absence, lack, and nothingness, of the subterranean world of the trench-body, leaving Apollinaire with the impression of being in vulnerable isolation from the rest of the world. When Stephen Kern comments in *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* that the First World War shook belief in human progress and evolution, he provides a compelling context for us understanding Apollinaire's anxiety at being assimilated into the empty environment populated only by cemeteries: 'tombés' could suggest both a feeling of spatial and temporal dislocation, as if Apollinaire imagines he has fallen back in time to a 'dim prehistoric age', in the words of a British soldier describing trench mud.<sup>22</sup> Yet this very 'lieu sinistre' that Apollinaire finds himself in is the very product of industrial modernity, the result of the latest technology. This contradiction is powerfully captured by Gertrude Stein when she writes that the war 'makes things go backward as well as forward'.<sup>23</sup>

The epistolary form therefore opens up an understanding of Apollinaire's modernism as not unequivocally seeing war as a phase in the onward ascent of modernity, but rather a movement of tensions and contradictions. Playing out the vulnerability inherent in the act of eating and smelling by imagining an inverted scenario where he is himself incorporated into the material world, Apollinaire's sensory imagination assimilates the anxieties of his self into

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<sup>21</sup> Apollinaire, '1 juillet 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), pp. 1-10; soldier Frank Mitchell, cited in Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*, p. 44.

<sup>23</sup> Cited in Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*, p. 44.



a wider anxiety over how war is altering the course and progress of modernity. When Das explores how Kristeva's theory of abjection filters through the representation of touch in First World War Literature, he powerfully articulates how proximal sense experience ties its subjects to the fraught material and historical specificity of war in a way that can help us to understand Apollinaire's anxiety:

In recent years, the abject body has become something of a celebratory, emancipatory force, stretching the boundaries of the aesthetic, and endlessly represented [...] it is important to remember, in this regard, that the horrors in the texts of Barbusse and Céline have a definite relation to actual experience: they cannot be wholly extrapolated from their historical contexts which give them a peculiar urgency, 'the touch of the real.'<sup>24</sup>

Apollinaire's olfactory and gustatory experiences in his exploration of the relationship with self and world therefore remind us that he cannot escape his actual, lived experience of warfare. Here, it is the smell and taste 'of the real' that gives Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine the powerful urgency of material and historical context. Where in 'Merveille de la guerre', Apollinaire's poetic self can deny this relation to the material world, in the letters to Madeleine, Apollinaire's epistolary self is unequivocally shaped by it.

When confronted with the lingering smell of putrefying flesh, the dual crossing of corporeal thresholds – the flesh from the interior of the body, and the smell permeating his own boundaries – forced Apollinaire to recognise his own mortality. When he then conceptualised the trench as a personified, chewing body, this recognition takes form in Apollinaire's shift from tasting subject to tasted object. In both olfactory and gustatory, physical and imagined, encounters, Apollinaire is denied the escape into a space of desire or memory; these senses

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<sup>24</sup> Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*, p. 62.

always pull him back into a confrontation with his material world that constantly forces his epistolary self to reconsider the stability and permeability of its margins and boundaries. How, then, do these encounters with the material world impact how Apollinaire imagines encounters with the absent body of Madeleine through olfactory and gustatory experiences? How are these encounters also mediated by the crossing of bodily margins or boundaries? Finally, how does the exchange between the interior and exterior of the body affect Apollinaire's construction of himself as a touching self that we explored in the previous chapter, responding to the letters as material traces of his and Madeleine's skin-to-skin encounter?

A comparison of two instances imagining the crossing of Madeleine's skin boundary can reveal how Apollinaire thinks about epistolary contact differently in the context of olfactory and gustatory experiences. Fantasising about Madeleine's kiss, of 21<sup>st</sup> October 1915 Apollinaire writes: 'Je te prends, ma Madeleine et nos langues jouent notre vie sur le gouffre rose de ta bouche que je baise.'<sup>25</sup> Apollinaire registers the intensity of his desire in the imagined haptic experience of exploring the inside of her mouth. Where a 'gouffre' indicating a gulf or an abyss, might invite descriptions of darkness or blackness (or recall the lack of the subterranean world of the trenches), Apollinaire's explosion of colour in the adjective 'rose' prompts the reader into imagining this space *texturally*, the sense of absence or emptiness replaced as they now imagine the depth and feel of this 'pinkness' against the exploring tongue. Elaine Scarry's exploration in *Dreaming by the Book* of how one 're-pictures' when reading can help us to understand how this textured desire is conveyed through language.<sup>26</sup> Scarry argues that the reader responds to a 'set of instructions' in a text in order to envision,

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<sup>25</sup> Apollinaire, '21 octobre 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 314.

<sup>26</sup> Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

in their minds, the human bodies, landscapes, material objects, light effects, and textures described. The colour 'rose', then, becomes Apollinaire's effort to guide the reader with the evocation of the haptic to give form to his sensory, non-linguistic experience. The linguistic pun of 'langues', read as tongues and languages, reveals how the senses become their own language through which Apollinaire can recreate his desire for Madeleine on the page.

When Apollinaire calls on this new language again in a letter just a week later to describe Madeleine's sex in terms of colour, however, he problematises this tactile and textual unfolding of desire. He writes to Madeleine: 'J'adore ta blancheur, et j'adore la grenade ouverte du parvis'.<sup>27</sup> Set directly against the whiteness of her skin, the pomegranate's flesh appears to bring the same flush of colour and texture that the 'gouffre rose' did: it too guides the reader, prompting them to imagine cutting open the peel of the pomegranate to reveal the seeded flesh inside as a means of imagining going beyond Madeleine's white skin not only to feel her hidden, fleshy erogenous zone, but to taste it too. Yet the 'grenade' also works as a pun: it can refer to both a pomegranate and a hand grenade. Harrow, drawing upon Melanie Klein's work on fetishistic investment in part-objects, has written compellingly on the 'erotics of combat' in Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*: she argues that the body of the female other is overwritten by military signifiers as part of a broader affirmation of the poet's own masculinity and individual authority faced with the pressures of war: it is fractured, atomised, a site of displacement for Apollinaire's own fears of the dissolution of bodily form that we explored in detail above.<sup>28</sup> When this self-protective drive is paired with the taste of the pomegranate, therefore, the use of a linguistic pun leads not to the link between touch and textuality ('langues'), but between taste and materiality; of which

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<sup>27</sup> Apollinaire, '29 octobre 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 343.

<sup>28</sup> Harrow, *The Material, The Real and the Fractured Self*, pp.106-107.

a doubled engagement emerges as the material sensation of taste ('grenade ouverte') rolls into the material language and reality of war. Taste once again leads Apollinaire to understand and reconcile his inextricability from the material world. But this time, by doing so to create a fantasy of masculinity, authority, and integrity in the imagined erotic encounter, Apollinaire transforms the crossing of corporeal boundaries into a self-affirmative act to protect himself from fears and anxieties over his own material vulnerability. We saw in Chapter One that the letters carry a material trace of Apollinaire and Madeleine's touch, but one that is a constant reminder of separation and absence, of only textual presence. When Apollinaire imagines crossing the skin boundary in the gustatory encounter, therefore, he is able to imagine a scenario in which he can overcome the temporal and spatial impossibilities of epistolary contact; both by a more direct and intimate engagement with Madeleine's body and by affirming his otherwise vulnerable epistolary self.

When Apollinaire imagines delving beyond the skin boundary and tasting the interior of Madeleine's body, the engagement with the material sensation of taste and material conditions of war gives way to a fantasy of both preserving the self and overcoming the distance of the epistolary relationship. The letter sent on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1915, however, problematises this fantasy when Apollinaire shifts from imagining tasting Madeleine to eating her:

Mais vous m'avez donné votre bouche. Je la savoure, je la dévore et toute vous jusqu'au plus secret de vous... l'immense désir que j'ai de votre jeune chair. Je suis comme un ogre à qui on présente un petit enfant à manger. Je prends vos lèvres follement comme un fruit exquis.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Apollinaire, '13 août 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 135.

The comparison of Madeleine's lips to the ambiguous 'fruit exquis', to be savoured and devoured in Apollinaire's passionate kiss, lacks the same affective weight of the comparison of the sex to the pomegranate or grenade: denied a sensory 'set of instructions', to repeat Scarry's phrase, the ambiguity of 'exquis' distances the reader from imagining the fleshy texture, colour, or taste of Madeleine's mouth. The incongruous image of Apollinaire 'comme un ogre' then marks a further retreat from the materiality of war into the imaginative world of fairy-tales, nursery rhymes, and legends. Can this transformation into an ogre also be read as part of the same fantasy of a tasting or eating self that has dominance over both the body of the other and the material world? A Bakhtinian reading of the grotesque body can help us to understand how the fantastical form of the ogre is connected to eating. In his seminal work on Rabelais, Bakhtin extols the capacity of the grotesque body to transgress its own limits, to '[ignore] the closed, smooth, impenetrable surface of the body and [retain] only its orifices', as a means of ripping the material world apart and growing at its expense.<sup>30</sup> For him, the direct confrontation or exchange between body and world is one in which the limits between them are 'erased' entirely 'to man's advantage'.<sup>31</sup> Such a celebration of the transgression of bodily thresholds is registered in Apollinaire's text by the primacy of the mouth: although descriptions of Madeleine's mouth frame the passage ('votre bouche'; 'vos lèvres [...] comme un fruit exquis'), it is the urgency of the verbs evoking Apollinaire's eating mouth which gives that passage momentum; 'je la savoure, je la dévore', 'je prends'. Where before, Apollinaire drew up on the imagery of material warfare to overwrite Madeleine's body, here, the retreat to legendary imagery allows him to play out a cannibalistic fantasy that hastens the reader

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<sup>30</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 318-319.

<sup>31</sup> Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 281.

away into a space of transformative and subversive desire, entirely to Apollinaire's 'advantage'.

Yet where before it was Madeleine's body that was displaced, here, the transformation of Apollinaire's own body, and the representation of this transformation, questions the limits of this gustatory fantasy. The transparency and immediacy of Apollinaire's new form – 'je suis comme un ogre' – paradoxically causes the reader to become confused, as they lose their ability to share in Apollinaire's imagination through the evocation of sensory signposts. When Mathews explores transparency in Apollinaire's poetry, he can help us to understand how this confusion undermines Apollinaire's supposed affirmation of a dominant epistolary self. Mathews reads such transparent language as a form of 'artifice controlled by the author', in order to formulate an 'illusion that the world and the structures of our response are revealed in the immediacy of an image or of a graceful movement'.<sup>32</sup> The image of the ogre therefore does not create the sense of a retreat into fantasy by its meaning alone: it is revealed to the reader in Apollinaire's swerving of sensory representation, as he seeks to manipulate the reader's response rather than guide them to recreate his own experience. As a result, the reader is denied a reading of Apollinaire as an eating subject that is dominant over the world around him, his self bolstered, expanding, and stable: rather, they are able to see through this desired self-affirmation as a fabrication and a fantasy. The act of eating now reveals the vulnerability of a self who can only fantasise about displacing his own fears of the fragile threshold between body and world onto the body of the other. This new relation between self and other reshapes Apollinaire's understanding of epistolary contact; it

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<sup>32</sup> Mathews, *Reading Apollinaire*, p. 214.

is no longer a productive crossing of temporal and spatial boundaries, but a reminder of the dangers of crossing bodily boundaries in the material reality of the trenches.

When Apollinaire constructs his tasting self as an ogre, he reveals a fear over the fate of his own material body as he cannot escape the possibility that he too, in war, may become the 'petit enfant à manger'. When, in a letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1915, Apollinaire imagines not just overwriting Madeleine's body in gustatory terms but his own bodily response to this subject-object incorporation, we can draw together the themes discussed in this chapter: the exchange between the interior and exterior of the body, the incorporation of the subject by the object, the crossing of thresholds. Enraptured by his desire, Apollinaire writes:

Ah ! non ! chérie je ne suis plus calme du tout et ma seule patience est que nous nous aimons, que vous êtes à moi jusqu'au tréfonds de vos entrailles [...] ô ma vigne – ma vigne chérie, aux grappes exquises, ma vigne dont le vin m'enivrera sans que je veuille jamais m'en désenivrer, ma toute chère petite vigne dont j'espère la vendange comme les hébreux espéraient la grappe démesurée de la terre promise de Chanaan, mais tournons, ma chérie, la feuille... de vigne.<sup>33</sup>

Apollinaire's depth of feeling is translated into the image of reaching far into the body ('jusqu'au tréfonds de vos entrailles'). Where the over-spilling of the interior body provoked the abject smell of 'putréfaction' in the trenches, Apollinaire imagines these 'entrailles' as a twisting vine producing 'grappes exquises'. He initially seems to rewrite the horror and abjection of the crossing of corporeal thresholds on the battlefield by drawing reference to 'Chanaan': the ambiguous, shifting, and deadly space of the trench is now compared to 'la terre promise'. If we recall Marks's argument explored at the beginning of this chapter that 'cultivated odors operate across a membrane from the material to the symbolic', then Apollinaire's intoxication can be read as a spiritual rite, elevating bodily desire and physical

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<sup>33</sup> Apollinaire, '23 août 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 144.

sensation into a transcendent redemptive release.<sup>34</sup> Yet just as we have seen how Apollinaire takes an equivocal and problematic stance on the progress and pressures of modernity, and on the past language of legends and fairy-tales, here he also denies the reader such a straightforward reading of religious symbolism. His bodily response spills onto the page as his intoxication unfurls in language: the oblique rhymes of 'vin'/ 'vigne', 'chérie'/ 'exquises' and 'm'enivrera'/ 'désenivrer' create a hurried and unpredictable pace which reaches a climax in the disintegration of meaning ('tournons, ma chérie, la feuille...de vigne'), as if Apollinaire has lost control over his own narrative. The reader therefore recognises the same difficulty in categorising, ordering, and explaining the world that we insistently saw as Apollinaire grappled with the exposure of flesh in the trenches. But as Apollinaire imagines incorporating Madeleine's body, through the imagery of incorporating the material world, only to be intoxicated by it and lose his agency, it is the position of his own selfhood which Apollinaire finds difficult to categorise. We saw that the epistolary form roots Apollinaire as both a subject and object in the material world. Now, he also takes on a sort of dual form due to the reciprocity of the epistolary relationship: he is a writing self, but when his letter passes into Madeleine's hands, he becomes the other to *her* writing self. In this passage, Madeleine's presence and power as this writing self in waiting intoxicates Apollinaire, and his grip on his subjectivity unravels.

It is this shifting between subject and object, self and world, and self and other, that pervades the gustatory and olfactory encounters we have explored in this chapter. As a tasting and smelling self, Apollinaire opens his bodily thresholds. But in so doing, he recognises his own ability to be overcome by the material world, and by his desire for the

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<sup>34</sup> David Berry puts forth such an interpretation of other instances of wine in Apollinaire's poetry; David Berry, *The Creative Vision of Guillaume Apollinaire*.



other. This anxiety plays out in the realisation that Apollinaire cannot overcome the frustrations of epistolary contact by imagining delving beyond the skin boundary; instead, he is bound by its reciprocal nature. The crossing of the skin boundary does not provide the release that Apollinaire desired; rather, it consolidates the fundamental anxiety of the soldier-self unable to escape the dangers of war.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Fracture: Sound and Hearing**

Apollinaire's engagement with the haptic, taste, and smell has thus far revealed a self fundamentally anxious and unresolved, as it both encounters the world and imagines Madeleine's real body at the other end of the epistolary tie. The immediacy and intimacy of these proximal senses has accentuated the body at the centre of Apollinaire's exploration of selfhood in the letters to Madeleine: one that is rooted in its own materiality and responsive to the challenges and shifts of the material world itself. The first chapter of my thesis focused on the exterior of the body. It explored the haptic through the interrelation of smoke and skin as a means of establishing the contours of Apollinaire's relationship between the self, the other (in the form of his nascent epistolary relationship with Madeleine) and the world (the challenging material landscape of modern warfare). The second chapter built on the instability of these relationships, exploring taste and smell in order to delve beyond the skin and focus on the interior of the body. The crossing and dissolving of corporeal boundaries left Apollinaire's epistolary self vulnerable to both the trappings of desire and the danger of life in the trenches. Traditionally perceived as distinct from these proximal senses, the distal sense of hearing has thus far been missing from my reading of the sensory fabric of the letters: the smells, tastes, and textures of Apollinaire's world have seeped into the reader's imagination but have done so, thus far, silently. How does Apollinaire's attention to and reproduction of sound on the page therefore test our understanding of the relationship between self, other, and world in the letters to Madeleine? This final chapter will explore how Apollinaire constructs himself as a listening self, both in relation to the soundscape of war

and to Madeleine's voice within this soundscape. It will conclude by exploring the overlap of listening and the haptic, in order to interrogate how the epistolary form can provide fresh insight into the nature of these entwined relationships between self, other, and the material world.

Examining a short passage where Apollinaire seeks to convey the sound of shells and bullets overhead will help us establish vital concepts in acoustic scholarship, and clarify how they will shape my forthcoming analysis of sound and selfhood in Apollinaire's correspondence with Madeleine. On 11<sup>th</sup> May 1915, Apollinaire writes from the relative ease of his sheltered dugout: 'les balles sifflaient au-dessus de nos têtes, sans danger naturellement. Elles sifflaient dans le silence ou plutôt fouettaient ce grand silence [...] Un invisible obus miaule.'<sup>1</sup> As Apollinaire moves between different forms of representing sound on the page, from reproduction in the form of the onomatopoeic 'sifflaient' and 'miaule' to the ekphrastic evocation of 'fouettaient', he calls attention to the tension between sound and silence central to understanding how sound works in text.<sup>2</sup> Hastening to find an accurate word to describe the sound of bullets and shells overhead, Apollinaire is all too aware that sound is a complex physical entity, dependant not only on the vibrations of the object that cause it but the various densities of matter through which it travels and by which it is tuned.<sup>3</sup> It is transient and invisible, always dependent on a carrying medium. Apollinaire's shifting verb choices are testimony to the efforts to pin down this transience and invisibility when sound enters that silent medium, the text. In *Reading Voices*, Garrett Stewart explores the ambiguous

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<sup>1</sup> Apollinaire, '11 mai 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 42; p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> James Hegelson calls attention to the need to distinguish between the actual production of sound and the ekphrastic evocation of sound. See Hegelson, 'Solemn Resonances: The Incomplete Monument and the Posthumous Soundscape', *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory*, 41 (2018), 79-94.

<sup>3</sup> Angela Leighton, *Hearing Things: The Work of Sound in Literature* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2018), pp. 19-49.

relationship between literary textuality and sonic phenomena in the following provocative antithesis, which can help us to understand Apollinaire's approach to sound: 'when we read to ourselves, our ears hear nothing. Where we read, however, we listen'.<sup>4</sup> Stewart acknowledges that no audible sound passes through the text. But when he ends his phrase with the objectless 'we listen', he draws into the radius of writing and reading the possibility of remembering, surmising, or imagining sound.<sup>5</sup> His demarcation of listening and hearing participates in a well-established tendency in acoustic scholarship that prioritises listening as the focused, attentive, and critical engagement with sound; articulated by Barthes as 'hearing is a physiological phenomenon; listening is a psychological act'.<sup>6</sup> Crucially, Stewart allows for the reader to be cast as this listener, imaginatively engaging with both the sounds evoked on the page and the voice of the writer themselves. Given the direct address and response of the epistolary relationship, Stewart's theorisation of the reader as listener is fundamental to my reading of sound in Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine.

The tension between sound and silence, central to understanding the textual mediation of sound, also operates within the passage above itself. The onomatopoeic quality of 'sifflaient' and 'miaule' heightens a sense of intrusion into the calm of silence that Apollinaire has established. When Michel Chion writes that 'silence, autrement dit, n'est jamais un vide neutre ; c'est le négatif d'un son qu'on a entendu auparavant ou qu'on

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<sup>4</sup> Garrett Stewart, *Reading Voices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 11. Stewart's work provides a theoretical grounding for the intersection of sound and sense in literature. Fundamental to Stewart's argument is the embodied nature of 'reading aloud' in one's head; when he writes 'where we read', the place of reading into which he inquires is not the physical location of the reader, but the reading body itself. Although Stewart's analysis does include the epistolary form or a specific reading of Apollinaire, this chapter draws on the concepts he develops to develop our understanding on the overlap of sound and sense in the letters to Madeleine.

<sup>5</sup> Leighton, *Hearing Things*, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Helen Groth, Julian Murphet and Penelope Hone, 'Introduction: Sounding Modernism 1890-1950' in Helen Groth, Julian Murphet and Penelope Hone (eds.), *Sounding Modernism: Rhythm and Sonic Mediation in Modern Literature and Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), p. 8.

imagine ; c'est le produit d'un contraste,' he can help us to interpret this evocation of intrusion: the texture of the silence, described as 'grand' and 'fouett[é]' as if it is thick, heavy, and all-encompassing, can be understood as the 'négatif d'un son' against which the onomatopoeias produce a jolt of acoustic contrast, their phonetic value prompting the reader to 'read aloud' those words.<sup>7</sup> This contrast is marked and textured by the animal dimension of these sounds: the evocation of hissing, whistling, whining and meowing marks a fusion of the exceptional and the everyday, the military and the natural worlds, and thus marks the richness of experience through sound.<sup>8</sup> Silence has therefore become a marker of different spaces and distances: the bullets and shells are the intrusion from the other 'invisible' zone that lies behind enemy lines. This reconfiguration of space through sound allies with an assertion by Douglas Kahn that sound is 'always relational, being somewhere or something else, a constant deflection'.<sup>9</sup> Kahn has built on the physical nature of sound as always relying on a carrying medium between two distinct points to suggest that the act of listening always implies questions about other spaces and other worlds. This is even more pronounced when those sounds are 'acousmatic', defined by Pierre Schaeffer as sounds that one hears without seeing what has caused them.<sup>10</sup> We have once before encountered the reconfiguration of space tied to the disturbance of the visually dominant sensory hierarchy. In the passage which introduces the first chapter of my thesis, Apollinaire was blinded by the smoke of the bromine attack. His resulting panicked reliance on touch unfurled in the spinning narrative, as Apollinaire built pace to mimic the scrambling of limbs and hands that rush to understand a

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<sup>7</sup> Michel Chion, *L'Audio-vision: Son et image au cinéma* (Paris: Nathan, 2000), p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> It is important to recognise that the soundscape of war includes non-verbal sounds and animal sounds.

<sup>9</sup> Douglas Kahn and Gregory Whitehead (eds.), *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio, and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> Pierre Schaeffer, *Traité des Objets Musicaux: Essai Interdiscipline* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977). I will explore acousmatic sounds and their connection to the epistolary form in greater detail later in the chapter.

newly unfamiliar environment. Here, however, the joining of 'invisible' with 'sans danger naturellement' casts the loss of stable, visual perception in a new light: Apollinaire uses the phrase 'sans danger naturellement' to reinforce and take comfort in his spatial refuge from the source of the sounds, his location 'somewhere else'. Listening to these sounds provides the safety and reassurance of distance that the act of touching, tasting, and smelling material stimuli denied.

Yet the joining of 'invisible' and 'sans danger naturellement' also asks the reader to reconsider the supposedly clear demarcation between sound and silence in Apollinaire's acoustic fashioning of space. Read in line with Raymond Murray Schafer's highly influential concept of the 'soundscape', the phrase 'sans danger naturellement' suggests a more complex experience of space and sound that moves beyond distance and separation and paves the way for a more nuanced relationship between self, other, and world.<sup>11</sup> Murray Schafer spearheaded the 'listening turn' in scholarship by calling for a new way of thinking about how we engage with the sounds of the world around us. He suggests that we should listen to all sounds of the environment, even those usually excluded from attention, with the same focus and critical engagement that we would use to listen to an orchestral score. This valorisation of the auditory in shaping and understanding a specific space marks a fundamental shift in perspective in how we apprehend the material world. Apollinaire's skipping between 'sifflaient', 'fouettaient' and 'miaule' responds to this call for closer attention to the background sounds of the world, however indistinct or 'sans danger' they

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<sup>11</sup> Raymond Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester: Destiny Books, 1994). A special issue of *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory*, entitled 'Sounding and Soundscapes', provided rigorous discussions on Schafer's soundscape concept, including recent criticisms of it as being framed too much in relation to the visual landscape. It was invaluable in helping to deepen my understanding of Schafer's original text. *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory*, 41 (2018).

may at first appear. His 'silence' is in fact not silent at all: it is populated with all the sounds of the trenches. These sounds continue to seep into the epistolary correspondence with Madeleine: he registers not only the 'zm pan' of explosions but the grass snakes which 'se lovent gracieusement et glissent en faisant bruire les roseaux', the drifting lyrics of enemy soldiers singing 'Ah! Qu'ils sont bons quand ils sont cuits/ Les Macaronis' to taunt the Italians, or the incessant tolling of 'cloches ou tonnerre'.<sup>12</sup> Apollinaire is not able to separate himself from the acoustic environment he moves through; the reader realises that he is entirely embedded within it, as he listens attentively to all sounds and populates his writing with them. The distance emphasised by 'invisible' is therefore misleading: Apollinaire is rather integrated into a soundscape that now asks not how the enemy and himself are separated, but how different people from different spaces interact with each other through a shared acoustic environment. Furthermore, following on from our analysis of Stewart's listening reader, the onomatopoeic quality of 'sifflaient' and 'miaule' brings the reader into this shared soundscape too: able to imagine and recreate the whistling and whining sounds themselves, it is as if they are able to listen to Apollinaire's environment through the text. Sound has become a means of integrating the self within the material world, and of connecting the self with others who also move through this world, including animals. It moves across the silent boundaries of the text to allow the reader to imaginatively partake of this same world.

When Connor argues that the 'auditory self discovers itself in the midst of the world and the manner of its inherence in it, not least because the act of hearing takes place in and through the body', he neatly summarises the relationship between distance and subjectivity developed in the concept of the soundscape: he allows sound to pave the way for a self that

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<sup>12</sup> Apollinaire, '11 mars 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 41; '20 mai 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 46; '23 juin 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 74.

is open and responsive to the world around it rather than alienated from it.<sup>13</sup> Yet Connor's insistence on the act of listening as corporeal asks us to look closer at how exactly sound mediates the relationship between the self, other, and the world. For this, Jean-Luc Nancy's *Listening* offers a provocative recasting of sound in relation to the haptic. Nancy uses the metaphor of skin stretched over a drum to evoke the reverberation and resonance of sound as it hits the 'listening body': 'Frappe du dehors, clameur du dedans, ce corps sonore, sonorisé, se met à l'écoute simultanée d'un « soi » et d'un « monde » qui sont l'un à l'autre en résonance'.<sup>14</sup> Nancy casts the listening body at the threshold between the soundscape of the exterior world ('frappe du dehors'), and the attention, focus, and resonance needed to understand this world ('clameur du dedans'). As the body flits between sonorous and sonorized, the act of listening suggests meaning in motion, just as the French verb *entendre* can mean both listening and understanding. But to go further, it also suggests the *self* in motion: asking not only what sound can tell us about other worlds (as Kahn did) or even how different worlds interact with each other (as Murray Schafer did), but how this loops back to a self constantly negotiating and approaching the meaning of these worlds. The tactility of Nancy's stretched skin, and its resulting 'frappe' and 'clameur', is mirrored in Apollinaire's use of 'fouettaient' to describe the sound of the bullets traversing the 'silence'. Apollinaire has shifted sound into a coextension with touch to move beyond merely attempting to reproduce accurately the sound on the page (as in 'sifflaient' and 'miaule'), now prompting the reader to fully comprehend Apollinaire's experience of the sound and his search to understand it. 'Sifflaient' and 'miaule' move outwards to the enemy, to Madeleine, or to the reader; 'fouettaient' moves inwards to Apollinaire's subjective response. In accentuating the tactile

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<sup>13</sup> Steven Connor, 'The Modern Auditory I', p. 203.

<sup>14</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *À l'Écoute* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 2002), p. 82.



and the experiential, Nancy has therefore recast listening alongside its proximal counterparts in order to offer a model of how to rethink aural subjectivity.

Nancy has reconsidered the vibratory, corporeal and felt basis of listening to bring the listening body alongside the body mediated by the proximal senses that I have thus far explored in this thesis. Far from being separated as a distal sense, listening has emerged as central to how the self understands its place both in the material world and in relation to the others who listen to it, be it the invisible enemy sending bullets and shells, Madeleine at the other end of the epistolary tie, animals, or the modern reader. Where the first chapter of this thesis explored the letters to Madeleine as an imagined skin-to-skin encounter, and the second chapter considered how Apollinaire imagined multiple crossings of corporeal thresholds, this chapter will interrogate how the body and subjectivity of the epistolary self is fractured in the act of listening.

In the passage introducing this chapter, Apollinaire explores the link between sound and the haptic to root his selfhood in the whistling, whining soundscape of war. A comparison of the ideogrammatic poem 'Visée', sent to Madeleine on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1915, with a passage from a letter that describes an attack witnessed by Apollinaire when he was working as a fire observer, sent on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1915, probes further how Apollinaire uses sound to explore the relationship between self and world. 'Visée' graphically evokes the raking fire of a machine gun across the page, inviting the reader to read each line as if imagining the stuttering sound of this motion (see Appendix 7):

Chevaux couleur cerise limite des Zélandes  
Des mitrailleuses d'or coassent les légendes

Je t'aime liberté qui veilles dans les hypogées  
 Harpe aux cordes d'argent ô pluie ô ma musique  
 L'invisible ennemi plaie d'argent au soleil  
 Et l'avenir secret que la fusée élucide  
 Entends nager le Mot poisson subtil  
 Les villes tour à tour deviennent des clefs  
 Le masque bleu comme met Dieu son ciel  
 Guerre paisible ascèse solitude métaphysique  
 Enfant aux mains coupées parmi les roses oriflammes<sup>15</sup>

The fusion of the military and the natural through sound reappears as Apollinaire asks the reader to imagine the croaking ('coassent') of machine guns and to '[entendre] nager le Mot poisson subtil'. Apollinaire shies away from further material representation of sound, however, when he encourages the reader to imagine the music from a silver harp in line 4. Lockerbie and Hyde Greet's suggestion that this musical intervention symbolises the poet's ability to transform and elevate his war experience seems to be supported when, two lines later, a spirit of poetic visionary confidence that pervades much of *Calligrammes* reasserts itself as Apollinaire looks towards an 'avenir secret que la fusée élucide'.<sup>16</sup> Apollinaire appears to have discovered in the very stuttering instruments of war a means to transcend their material reality. The repeated interjections, 'ô pluie ô ma musique', underline that the silver harp projects Apollinaire's thoughts into the space of the battlefield, erasing the immediate threat of war in favour of an affirmation of visionary poetic identity. However, the intervening line 5 challenges Lockerbie and Hyde Greet's insistence on a self unequivocally assured. The echo of 'cordes d'argent' in 'plaie d'argent' interrupts the reader's expected leap between lines 4 and 6, suggesting rather a correspondence between the silver harp and a silver wound

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<sup>15</sup> Apollinaire, *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 64.

<sup>16</sup> Apollinaire, *Calligrammes*, trans. by Anne Hyde Greet, p. 420. We saw this confidence in our analysis of 'Merveille de la guerre' in Chapter Two.

at the hands of the 'invisible ennemi'. The image of the wounded sun casts doubts on Apollinaire's musical transcendence of the horrors of the present conflict: the promise of a new dawn after war, of an 'avenir secret que la fusée élucide', is compromised, as if the fracturing reality of the destruction and historical dislocation of war has seeped into the text. The formal repetition of 'd'argent' therefore not only fractures the rhythm of the poem, forcing an internal rhyme; it also forces the reader to question the equivalence of music and assured poetic identity. Aligned with the suggestion of historical dislocation in the image of the dawn, this formal and conceptual fracture participates in a wider aesthetics of fracture that Winter, among others, suggests characterises art and literature of this period as many modernists found themselves fighting on the battlefield.<sup>17</sup> As Apollinaire shifts between the music of the harp and the fractured sounds of war, between an 'avenir secret' and the dislocation of the present moment, he therefore finds himself caught between creative experiment and his own human experience.

This same tension between the writing self and an external, collective event is mediated through a further exploration of sound and the motif of fracture in Apollinaire's 2<sup>nd</sup> September letter to Madeleine. The isolated harp in 'Visée' here gives way to an operatic performance as Apollinaire witnesses the unfolding conflict from the safe distance of his fire observer post:

J'étais comme dans une loge et par l'embrasure je voyais l'opéra se jouer ; une musique barbare et ininterrompue, coups de canons français et boches de tout calibre, coups de fusils, mitrailleuses. Les lueurs des coups illuminaient le ciel, les jets durs de la lumière des réflecteurs parcouraient le ciel acteurs singulièrement allongés qui se rapprochaient se reculaient grandissement se rapetissaient les fusées les signaux en pluie en gerbe en globe persistants blancs orange rouges bleus verts

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<sup>17</sup> Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*. See also: Kenneth Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914-1925* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989).

montaient, danseuses singulières et exquises [...] vous qui aimez le spectacle vous auriez aimé être là.<sup>18</sup>

By framing the passage as if he is peering into an opera ('J'étais comme dans une loge et par l'embrasure'), Apollinaire establishes himself as a spectator of both sound and vision. The passage traces this intertwining sensory display, moving between the distinct 'musique' of different weapons and describing the movement of light across the sky. As punctuation gives way and the pace quickens, it reaches a climax when 'les fusées' and 'les signaux' burst. The distinct sensory descriptions now conjoin in a breathless list of monosyllabic shapes of colours that simultaneously imitate the explosion of light and the 'barbare et ininterrompue' sounds of cannons. This drive towards simultaneity of expression responds to the modernist aesthetics of fracture in 'Visée', recalling the contemporary trend of collage in Cubist visual culture that fragmented the subject in order to produce an image of multiple viewpoints and overlapping planes. The use of 'barbare' only serves to embed Apollinaire's style in the modernist period further: Kenneth Silver carefully traces the association of Cubism and German 'barbarity' in the eyes of a cautious French nation seeking comfort in classical imagery and styles.<sup>19</sup> Where in 'Visée' Apollinaire used the single silver harp to seek escape from his material surroundings, in this letter he uses the conceit of the conflict as an opera to literally enact Murray Schafer's call to listen to the environment with the same focus and attention as one would listen to an orchestral score. In listening to the score of modern warfare, he has reworked the motif of fracture in order to evoke not just modern sounds, but a modernist soundscape.

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<sup>18</sup> Apollinaire, '2 septembre 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, pp. 160-161. The punctuation, or lack thereof, is transcribed exactly from Apollinaire's letter.

<sup>19</sup> Silver, *Esprit de Corps*, pp. 3-28.

On first reading, Apollinaire's close attention to the interlacing patterns of sound and vision suggests that he has constructed himself as the attentive and reflective listener that Murray Schafer called for in his theorisation of the soundscape. Yet it is in his very construction of himself as a distanced listener (and spectator) that Apollinaire builds on the fracture of poetic identity that we saw in 'Visée', now in the epistolary form. Exploring the use of the first-person narrator in her study of Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* collection, Harrow connects the fracturing that informed the Cubist practices explored above (most notably collage) and the fissuring of the self in autobiographical writing.<sup>20</sup> She explains that the autobiographical self is doubly represented: it splinters between being the narrating 'je' of the present and the narrated 'je', grappling with a past 'variously archived, recalled, reconstructed, fantasized, and allegorized'.<sup>21</sup> The letter writer, too, sees its self fissured into these 'multiple narrative instances': Apollinaire must recall events beyond the moment of epistolary writing in order to convey them to Madeleine, and so bring back to life his past 'je' alongside his current, writing 'je'. When Apollinaire imagines himself in an opera box, he reveals a self-consciously narrating voice (a narrated 'j'étais' and 'je voyais') which 'recalls, reconstructs, fantasises' the conflict as an extravagant spectacle. As the passage ends with Apollinaire breaking the narration and directly addressing Madeleine – 'vous qui aimez le spectacle vous auriez aimé être là' – neither this narrated 'je' nor the present narrating or writing self are reclaimed, but rather they are displaced further in a shift to 'vous'. The reader is left unanchored as the multiple sides of Apollinaire's epistolary self are fractured across the page. Just as in 'Visée', here Apollinaire has had to negotiate the variable relations between self and external, collective world. Yet where the fracturing of sound in 'Visée' posed a

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<sup>20</sup> Harrow, *The Material, the Real, and the Fractured Self*, pp. 62-113.

<sup>21</sup> Harrow, *The Material, the Real, and the Fractured Self*, p. 85.

challenge to the assurance of his poetic identity and visionary fantasy, in this epistolary passage, it is in constructing himself as a listening spectator that Apollinaire's own writing subjectivity shatters, and he becomes an uneasy witness to history.

Earlier in this chapter, we saw that Nancy situated the listening body on the threshold between a self and world in resonance with each other. When listening to the fracturing sounds of modern warfare and so engaging in both the personal and historical significance of his material conditions, Apollinaire finds himself simultaneously turning inwards. His subjectivity fractures as he grapples between being both witness and participant, both narrator of his experience and narrated subject on the epistolary page. Yet what happens when Apollinaire constructs himself as a listener not in relation to the material world around him, but within the confines of his epistolary relationship, as a 'listener' to Madeleine? A passage describing the arrival of Madeleine's first piece of correspondence, written by Apollinaire in his first reply addressed on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1915, reveals how Apollinaire calls upon the realms of sound, listening, and traversing distance, to define the contours of their nascent epistolary relationship:

Quelle extraordinaire surprise m'attendait hier soir vers dix heures pendant une incroyable canonnade agrémentée de fusillade et cependant que tournait le moulin à café [...] le vaguemestre me crie : « Un paquet d'Algérie pour toi. »

Et le gentil colis oranais était là tandis que pleuvaient les 120 et les 88 autrichiens et les 77 boches. Caisson mignon tout chargé d'obus délicieux et pacifiques ! [...] je vous revois petite voyageuse discrète [...] Quelques heures dans un train ! Un merveilleux souvenir et la guerre comme décor avec la pluie tandis qu'il tonne désespérément et à mourir du côté de Perthes.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Apollinaire, '5 mai 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 38.

The package arrives in a cacophony of sounds from conflicting origins. The voice of the post orderly cuts through the machinery of modern warfare ('incroyable canonnade agrémentée de fusillade'), only to be subsumed by both the sounds of individual weapons and the rain and distant thunder. By even indicating the exact sizes of the weapons and using direct speech to create the illusion of unmediated contact with the post orderly, Apollinaire roots his experience of receiving the parcel in an acoustic reality: each sound neatly corresponds to its source, always deferring to its material precedent. When Apollinaire finally reads the letter from Madeleine that has caused so much anticipation, however, there is a disturbance of the expected sound and source relationship that alters the coordinates of Apollinaire's experience of being a self in resonance with the world. Apollinaire defines Madeleine in terms of her auditory contribution to their initial exchange on the train, 'diserte' suggesting her disposition to be forthcoming and talkative. Yet he immediately problematises her auditory presence by imagining this exchange (their conversation) in a visual mode, using 'je revois' instead of 'j'écoute' or 'j'entends'. Where in the previous chapters of this thesis we have seen that Apollinaire uses figurative language to guide his reader to imagine the touch, taste, and smell of Madeleine's body, here 'petite voyageuse diserte' is in fact trapped between two insular acts of visual imagination and memory: 'je revois' quickly gives way to 'un merveilleux souvenir et la guerre *comme décor* [my emphasis]', as if Apollinaire imagines a tableau in his mind complete with foreground action and background setting. When, as we have seen, this 'décor' has been so firmly defined as an auditory one, the reader is left confused: it is as if Apollinaire can hear Madeleine's 'diserte' voice alongside the other sounds making up the soundscape but is reminded at the last minute that it is either only a memory, or Apollinaire's imagination of her spoken voice prompted by her written one. Compared to the precise correspondence of other sounds and their sources, Madeleine's voice becomes a sound which

seems to be both present and absent, both attached to her body on the train, or in Algeria, and separate from it.

The work of Chion on the 'acousmètre' in his field of film studies can help us to understand this confusion between sound and source, between vocal presence and bodily absence.<sup>23</sup> Adapting Schaeffer's notion of the 'acousmatic' as a sound that one hears without seeing its source, Chion has coined the term 'acousmètre' to specify cinematic instances where the acousmatic presence is a voice whose position with respect to the screen is undecidable, and where the voice is audible and effective within the visible scene but is not seen to speak. It is therefore a voice which exists between sound and vision, participating in a complex process of transfer and interchange between them.<sup>24</sup> Connor has engaged with Chion's theory to broaden its reach beyond film studies, using the theory of the 'acousmètre' as a springboard for exploring all kinds of dissociated and disembodied voices. Can Madeleine's voice be understood within these theoretical boundaries, as a sort of written acousmatic form on the epistolary page?<sup>25</sup> Madeleine's voice is also subject to an unsettling of the relationship between sound and vision, between presence and absence. It is an unsettling which fractures her voice from her body: when Apollinaire ambiguously claims to 'revoi[r]' Madeleine as a 'petite voyageuse diserte', he leaves open a possibility of dissociation and disembodiment as he grapples with Madeleine's present written voice and the memory of her absent spoken one. The creation of a soundscape seems to root Apollinaire in his material surroundings in a more stable way than we saw in the opera box passage above. Yet,

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<sup>23</sup> Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema* trans. by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 21.

<sup>24</sup> Connor, 'The Modern Auditory I', pp. 203-224.

<sup>25</sup> While Milne explores the 'disembodiment' of the letter-writer's body, her research is emblematic of epistolary scholarship by not considering how the voice could be disembodied on the epistolary page. Milne, *Letters, Postcards, Email Technologies*, p. 2.



faced with the acousmatic presence of Madeleine haunting this soundscape with its lack of fixed state, Apollinaire opens up once again the space for instability and corporeal ambiguity that we have seen throughout this study.

Madeleine's ambiguous acousmatic presence, imagined between sound and vision, forms an uneasy relationship with the accompanying sounds of Apollinaire's environment. In a letter sent on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1915, Apollinaire turns to advancements in modern technology to explore how Madeleine's acousmatic voice operates within the epistolary sphere. He writes:

Dans votre dernière lettre, vous me demandez, Madeleine, le silence sur vous. Je vous demande autant. Ne montrez point mes lettres. Gardez-les pour vous... Elles ne sont que pour vous. [...] Comment me risquer à vous dire [mes pensées tendres] tandis que je ne sais rien des desseins du petit cœur africain (le joli poste de T.S.F.) dont je voudrais bien écouter, comme son télégraphiste, les battements...<sup>26</sup>

Using the term 'vocalic uncanny', his own adaption of Chion's 'acousmètre' to describe a sourceless and ambiguous voice in excess of the locating eye, Connor explores the telephone and radio in a way that can help us to interpret Apollinaire's engagement with auditory technology in the form of the 'T.S.F.', the wireless set. Connor traces a double logic to the modern technologies that use sound to mediate between different people in different spaces: on the one hand, they hold an 'integrative power to conjoin separated entities'; on the other hand, they hold a 'diffusive power to cross and dissolve boundaries'.<sup>27</sup> Although Connor never uses the term 'prosthetic', his delineation of the two conflicting relationships between bodies, space and technology maps onto a broader critical trend that uses prosthesis as a trope to interrogate these relationships.<sup>28</sup> Armstrong, for example, mirrors Connor's logic by differentiating between the extrapolation of human capacities by technology (their

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<sup>26</sup> Apollinaire, '3 juin 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 58.

<sup>27</sup> Connor, 'The Modern Auditory I', p. 216.

<sup>28</sup> See in particular: Sarah Jain, 'The Prosthetic Imagination: Enabling and Disabling the Prosthesis Trope', *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 16 (1999), 31-54.

‘integrative’ properties) and the necessary replacement of a body part, covering lack, to do so (their ‘diffusive’ properties).<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the prosthetic trope resonates within epistolary studies when scholars grapple with the physicality of the letter and its relation to the body of the letter-writer. Stanley, for example, theorises the epistolary relationship as only a part of the whole lived relationship; but as a part which, just as the prosthesis can stand metonymically for the stigmatised amputee, can signify the whole relationship. Earle and Sarah Poustie build on this interpretation by engaging more directly with the materiality of the letter, claiming that it stands in for the writer’s body and so creates a sense of the writer’s physical presence.<sup>30</sup> The final section of this chapter will develop the theoretical framework of prosthesis (and the connections between the strands explored here), tracing how the two conflicting positions of prosthetic auditory technology challenge Apollinaire’s relationship between self, other, and world in the epistolary form. In doing so, the motif of fracture that has run throughout this chapter thus far takes on a new significance, relating to the fracture of the body, and the importance of the relationship between body parts and the whole.

Madeleine’s acousmatic presence in the passage above is defined by distance. Desperately seeking to create a shared acoustic environment with Madeleine, Apollinaire tries to evoke the mutual intimacy of the bodily and vibrational nature of listening: he implores her not to show his correspondence to anyone, moving away from the visual imaginary of ‘je revois’ in the previous passage towards the explicitly acoustic mode signalled by ‘écouter’. Yet the shift in the mood of the verbs in this transition, from the imperative ‘montrez’ to the conditional ‘voudrais bien écouter’, betrays the anxious and anticipatory

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<sup>29</sup> Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study*, p. 78.

<sup>30</sup> Liz Stanley, ‘The Epistolary Pact, Letterness, and the Schreiner Epistolarium’, *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, 27 (2012), pp. 262-293; Earle, ‘Introduction: Letters, Writers, and the Historian’ in Earle (ed.), *Epistolary Selves*, pp. 1-12; Poustie, ‘That is supposed to be my foot’, pp. 139-67.

nature of Apollinaire's listening self faced with an uncanny acousmatic presence. This sense of unbreachable distance is confounded by his reduction in the passage to the 'télégraphiste', the anonymous and impartial operator merely destined to transmit the messages of Madeleine without meaningful participation. Apollinaire can no longer hear, recall, or surmise Madeleine's voice through the page; rather, he imagines picking up the sound of her heartbeat, rendered distant and faint as 'les battements' appears two phrases later than the mention of 'petit cœur' and trails off with an ellipsis. The 'joli poste de T.S.F.' would offer the tantalising ability to collapse this distance between Apollinaire and Madeleine through sound, by extending and extrapolating the powers of the human voice by prosthetic means. Yet when, two letters later, Apollinaire receives the reassurance of reciprocated feeling that he so desperately desired, and so has successfully picked up the sounds from Madeleine's 'petit cœur africain', he registers the collapse of distance not just through sound but by the haptic too: 'Parfaitement j'entends votre voix grave, elle enveloppe mon cœur et le réchauffe. Vous ne pouvez imaginer quels transports me cause cette faculté que j'ai entendu, votre voix.'<sup>31</sup> Apollinaire has shifted from the anxious 'télégraphiste' picking up faint signals to imagining himself as the beneficiary of the integrative powers of prosthetic technology, his ability to hear 'parfaitement' cast as a new 'faculté'. Yet the comfort of this new mode of metaphorical listening is registered in terms of warmth ('réchauffe'), weight ('enveloppe'), and bodily movement ('quels transports me cause cette faculté'). It is when Apollinaire shifts the sense of hearing into coexistence with the haptic that the letters can be fully understood as prosthetic, fully facilitating the 'caress from a distance' that we explored in the material trace of the letters in Chapter One. Apollinaire's description of warmth, weight, and movement

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<sup>31</sup> Apollinaire, '22 juin 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 68.

therefore allows him to imagine that Madeleine, and her voice, are really present. Most crucially, the overlap of the haptic and hearing also recalls our discussion earlier in this chapter on Nancy's reworking of aural subjectivity; when Apollinaire imagines *actually* hearing Madeleine's voice, he also imagines how it touches him, both physically and metaphorically. The imagination of the letters as a prosthesis therefore accommodates both an extension of Madeleine's voice, and an extension of Madeleine's touch. It is only this conjoining of listening and the haptic that allows Apollinaire to shift from the 'télégraphiste' to the equal participant in the epistolary conversation.

Yet when we look more closely at the displacement of Madeleine's voice with the non-verbal sound of the heartbeat, the integrative and positive powers of prosthetic technology in overcoming distance are challenged. When Apollinaire writes 'je ne sais rien des desseins du petit cœur africain (le joli poste de T.S.F.) dont je voudrais bien écouter, comme son télégraphiste, les battements...', it is not only 'les battements' later in the sentence which forms a disquieting echo, but also the bracketed phrase 'le joli poste de T.S.F.'. The call-and-echo structure mimics the pulsating sound of the heartbeat, strengthened by the almost exact repetition of the metric structure of each phrase ('du petit cœur africain' / 'le joli poste de T.S.F.'). This metric resemblance jolts the reader into confronting the uncanny acousmatic presence of a sound relayed through technology: they feel the shock of listening to the wireless set and Madeleine's heartbeat simultaneously. The fracturing of the voice and body relation that we saw in the discussion of the 'acousmètre' earlier in this chapter has therefore been extended further: the call-and-echo structure has confused the boundaries between Madeleine's voice, body, *and* technology. David Wills's writing on speed and prosthesis can help us to understand how this 'crossing and dissolving' of corporeal boundaries, to re-use Connor's terminology, compares to an understanding of the letters as integrative prosthesis,

and Apollinaire's listening self as restored. Wills connects the mutations of speed in modern technology with the reconfiguration of the body faced with radical loss:

Speed always operates within the perspective of prosthesis to the extent that it is always haunted by that sense of the monstrous and the mutant, never simply the threat of displacement to another place without also being the threat of displacement to another state.<sup>32</sup>

The uncanny echo of 'du petit Coeur africain' / 'le joli poste de T.S.F.' enacts this double displacement: it not only marks the transition of Madeleine's heartbeat to occurring simultaneously in two places, but in the dissolving of boundaries between body and machine it suggests the threat to Madeleine's corporeal integrity. The shock of the power of modern technology is displaced onto Madeleine's body itself, as she takes on the 'monstrous and mutant' quality that Wills referred to, by becoming a sort of machine-woman hybrid. Here, Apollinaire is not comforted by the warmth of Madeleine's imagined presence. Rather, the prosthetic auditory technology serves to highlight the fracture and loss that defines both Madeleine's acousmatic voice and the distance between the two lovers. Madeleine's acoustic presence can only ever be a haunting echo in the epistolary relationship.

Earlier in this chapter, we saw how Apollinaire described the package of newly arrived letters as a 'caisson mignon tout chargé d'obus délicieux et pacifiques'. The use of shells immediately recalls the interchange of 'obus' and breasts across Apollinaire's wartime poetry, most notably in 'Fusée' where he overtly states that 'tes seins sont les seuls obus que j'aime'.<sup>33</sup> As we explored in Chapter Two, Harrow reads such corporeal instances in the poetry as deferring and displacing anxieties over the fracturing of Apollinaire's own male body.<sup>34</sup> As

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<sup>32</sup> David Wills, 'Technology or the Discourse of Speed' in Marquand Smith and Joanne Morra (eds.), *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2006), p. 246.

<sup>33</sup> Apollinaire, 'Fusée', *Calligrammes*, p. 147.

<sup>34</sup> Harrow, *The Material, The Real and the Fractured Self*, pp. 106-107.

Apollinaire feels the pressures of modern conflict, he could be read here as also overwriting Madeleine's most sexualised body part, her breasts, in a further desperate affirmation of individual authority and masculinity. But how does our understanding of this atomisation and displacement change when it is tied to the letter as an 'obus' too? In line with the work of epistolary theorists Stanley, Earle, and Poustie, we can now read this instance of overwriting as an exchange between the body part and the whole. It therefore describes an epistolary exchange defined by the fracture, mutation, and displacement of Madeleine's body. This treatment of Madeleine's body reinserts itself when Apollinaire overwrites Madeleine's 'petit cœur' as a wireless set, as he anxiously awaits her reciprocity of feeling in her epistolary response. Apollinaire may have retained his own corporeal integrity in describing himself in contrast as the 'télégraphiste', suggesting that he is more concerned with the displacement of the place than the state of his body. Yet, read in line with both Wills's emphasis on the haunting quality of Madeleine's 'monstrous' and 'mutant' hybrid body and Harrow's exploration of the atomisation of female bodies as a lens for masculine instability, Apollinaire seems to have thinly veiled the pressure of the possibility of his own monstrous mutation. The fracturing of Madeleine's body and voice has paved the way for an epistolary self always haunted by the possibility of fracture.

Apollinaire casts himself as a variety of different types of listener throughout his epistolary correspondence to Madeleine, but each instance is united by a fracturing of his subjectivity. When he listens carefully and attentively to the modernist soundscape of war, Apollinaire feels torn between individual, creative experiment and collective, historical event. His narrating and narrated voice splits as he becomes an uneasy witness to the history unfolding around him. When he tries to identify Madeleine's voice within this soundscape, it is the relationship between Madeleine's voice and her own body which fractures. Remoulding

this acousmatic presence in terms of wireless prosthetic technology offers Apollinaire the possibility of listening as an equal and active participant in the epistolary exchange. But his listening self is ultimately always haunted by the 'monstrous and mutant' fracture that defines his and Madeleine's relationship. Traditionally perceived as a distal sense, attention to sound and listening has propelled Apollinaire into a new relationship between his self, other, and the world. By exploring the prosthetic relation, and so recasting hearing in terms of the haptic, Apollinaire's listening self has ultimately built upon the productively unstable nature of subjectivity exposed by Apollinaire's engagement with touch, taste, and smell.

## Conclusion

Ma chère petite Madeleine.

Je suis fatigué et il y a si peu d'amitiés pour moi en ce moment à Paris que j'en suis navré.

L'égoïsme est partout. Je vais beaucoup mieux mais avec de grands étourdissements encore et une impotence fonctionnelle du bras gauche.

Je ne suis plus ce que j'étais à aucun point de vue et si je m'écoutais je me ferais prêtre ou religieux. Je suis si éloigné de mon livre qui vient de paraître que je ne sais même si je te l'ai fait envoyer. Sinon avertis-m'en. Je te le ferais envoyer aussitôt.

Je t'embrasse mille fois.

Gui.<sup>1</sup>

In the last letter that Apollinaire sent to Madeleine on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1916, he articulates the anxious and unresolved nature of epistolary selfhood that is the central argument of this thesis. Seven months earlier, on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1916, Apollinaire had sustained a headwound from an exploding shell and consequently left the trenches for treatment in various hospitals across Paris. The headwound left him with a disconcerting sense of self-alienation: he felt 'si éloigné' from the self he read in his book. Therefore, it caused Apollinaire to confront and recognise the fracturing of the self that is possible through writing. I have demonstrated how this fracturing is particularly compelling on the epistolary page, as Apollinaire grapples with both his writing self, composing letters to Madeleine in moments of rest and desire in the trenches, and his written self, the persona he constructs on the page as he recalls and reimagines his past experiences. The instability of the alienated self in this final letter therefore reflects the development of the epistolary self that we have explored throughout Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine.

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<sup>1</sup> Apollinaire, '23 novembre 1916', *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 508.



I have argued that the senses operate as a receptive interface between the self, other, and material world in Apollinaire's epistolary correspondence to Madeleine. Apollinaire transformed sensory experiences, memories, and desires into new ways of exploring and representing moments of anxiety and longing, fear and elation, in the trenches on the epistolary page. This thesis is significant in suggesting that the non-visual senses enabled the conflicted, anxious self to be made and remade on this page: the intimate separation of touch, the crossing of corporeal boundaries of taste and smell, the fracturing potential of sound.

Captivated by the imagined touch of Madeleine's skin, Apollinaire's writing revealed how present and pressing his body was in the construction of the epistolary self. Apollinaire created a haptic geography of the trenches that rooted the stability of his self in his tactile awareness of his surroundings. As he moved through the space of the dugout and interacted with the material objects there, he discovered a rich and fragile seam of contact between the self and the material world. The letters work as a problematic material objects in this space. They mark the corporeal absence of Madeleine yet retain the cutaneous trace of her physical touch, carried across the epistolary tie in a semi-permanent caress. When Apollinaire imagines this trace of skin in terms of smoke, however, he is struck by the separation inherent in the act of touching and the impossibility of epistolary contact. The complex materiality of the letters therefore questions how, as texts, these letters can both extend and displace the body, can both connect two bodies and highlight their separation. Engaging with the philosophical work of Anzieu and Serres, the opening chapter traced how skin and the haptic established the contours of Apollinaire's unresolved and unstable self in relation to Madeleine and the material world.

Ultimately, the skin boundary could not protect Apollinaire's sense of self against the pressures of an absent lover and the reality of the trenches. Exploring how Apollinaire imagined the crossing of this external, bodily boundary through gustatory and olfactory encounters, the second chapter of this thesis deepened our understanding of how Apollinaire inhabited the material world of modern warfare through the lived experience of his body. The abject exposure of flesh on the battlefield caused Apollinaire to confront the materiality of his body in new ways: his corporeal awareness in terms of taste and smell forced a recognition that he is both a subject creating from within this world and an object appraised from without. Apollinaire sought to rework the crossing of corporeal boundaries as a metaphor for overcoming the limited touch in the epistolary relationship. Yet the fluctuations between tasting and smelling self and tasted and smelled object re-emerged as Apollinaire fluctuated between writing and reading self in the epistolary encounter. This chapter therefore demonstrated that the materiality of the perceiving body and perceived material world was fundamental to the shaping of Apollinaire's epistolary selfhood.

The final chapter of this thesis moved beyond the exploration of the skin exterior of the body, and the fleshy interior of the body, to probe how sound and hearing relates to the motif of fracture. Apollinaire cast himself as a variety of different types of listener throughout his epistolary correspondence to Madeleine: both as a careful and attentive listener to the modernist soundscape of war, and as an anxious and anticipatory listener to Madeleine's acousmatic voice on the epistolary page. The epistolary form fractures the relationship between the voice and the body of the letter-writer. Even when Apollinaire theorises the letters as a form of auditory, technological prosthesis, his listening self is ultimately haunted by this fracture that defines his and Madeleine's epistolary relationship. This chapter engaged with the intersecting themes of modernity, technology, and embodiment in the prosthetic

trope in order to probe new ways of thinking about sound in terms of the haptic, and so new ways of looking at, and listening to, the epistolary self.

Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine have been marginalised for too long in Apollinaire scholarship. In exploring these letters as literary texts, this thesis has identified the potential of this less recognised modernist genre for exploring the construction of modernist selfhood. This enquiry should encourage more sustained critical attention to other published letters by Apollinaire, such as the letters to his previous lover Lou who he met in Nice in 1914. While these letters have been published in fine critical editions by Michel Décaudin and by Laurence Campa, further exploration from a sensory perspective would offer fresh critical insights on Apollinaire's sense of self at the outset of war, as he first grappled with the scale of material and ideological change.<sup>2</sup> A comparative study with the letters to Madeleine could trace how Apollinaire's shifting attitudes to the intensifying conflict impacted his epistolary expression of selfhood.

In comparing Apollinaire's epistolary correspondence with Madeleine to poems sent in these letters and later published in the collection *Calligrammes*, this study started to probe the productive points of overlap and divergence between the genres used by Apollinaire to represent the shifting relationships between self, other, and world in the trenches. Future scholarship could explore the potential of these intertextual encounters further. For example, a sustained comparative study of the letters to Madeleine to *Calligrammes* could deepen our understanding of Apollinaire's problematic stance on the material and historical circumstances of war. It could also carry forward questions on the materiality of the letters

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<sup>2</sup> Guillaume Apollinaire, *Lettres à Lou* ed. by Michel Décaudin (Paris: Gallimard, 1969); Guillaume Apollinaire, *Je Pense à Toi Mon Lou: Poèmes et Lettres d'Apollinaire à Lou* ed. by Laurence Campa (Paris: Textuel, 2007).

by probing the wealth of materials that Apollinaire sometimes used to write his letters and poems: military postcards, stray pieces of paper, wrapping paper, and magazine covers. How are Apollinaire's texts understood differently depending on their material medium? How do these encounters with materiality further impact our understanding of Apollinaire's selfhood? These questions open up fresh vistas for the study of Apollinaire's poetry, war literature studies, and modernism more generally.

One of my key aims at the outset of this enquiry was to readdress the marginalisation of non-visual sensory experiences in Apollinaire scholarship. By drawing attention to the varied and thought-provoking forms these sensory encounters take in Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine, I hope to encourage further consideration of the non-visual senses in Apollinaire's writing. My research has necessarily focused on each non-visual sense in turn as a means of fully re-evaluating how each sense shaped Apollinaire's conflicting and unresolved selfhood. Nevertheless, there is scope beyond the restricted space of this project to more fully explore instances of synesthetic experience or how the sensorium works as a network in Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine and in his poetry more broadly. The connection drawn between touch and hearing in terms of prosthetic technology in the final chapter, in particular, suggests productive and exciting future avenues of research on how the senses work together, and how this can open new possibilities for understanding subjectivity.

This thesis traced three different stages of the body as it was expressed in Apollinaire's letters to Madeleine: the skin exterior, the fleshy interior, the fractured body part. There is potential to explore a fourth stage: how Apollinaire's traumatic head injury impacted the expression of selfhood in the paintings he completed while recovering in Parisian hospitals and the play *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, which premiered in June 1917. Carrying forward an

understanding of the senses as a receptive interface between the self, other, and material world, this research could employ a sensory perspective to prompt new readings of Apollinaire's selfhood beyond the epistolary form.

We can conclude by asking what happened to Apollinaire and Madeleine's relationship. The intensity and passion of their epistolary relationship dwindled in the months following a fifteen-day long visit from Apollinaire to Madeleine's home in Oran, Algeria in December 1915. The trace of Apollinaire's previous erotic *élan* is lost as his letters get shorter, more descriptive and more doubtful. Apollinaire's shift in tone is surprising and disconcerting; there is no record of his stay with Madeleine and no letters through which to trace his fluctuating experiences. The real-life encounter that Apollinaire so desperately desired – vicariously created through the intense imagination of the touch of Madeleine's skin, of the taste and smell of their erotic fantasy, and of Madeleine's voice amid the soundscape of war – seems to have taken away the passions, pressures, and possibilities that shaped and enlivened their epistolary relationship. But why do these productive tensions dissipate when the epistolary contact resumes? However tantalising this question is, to seek an answer would go against the ethos of this thesis by resorting to a biographical approach. Instead, as the modern reader, we feel the same detachment and confusion that Madeleine felt. The letters to Madeleine, right until the end, continued to be testimony to Apollinaire's construction of his own selfhood on the page. The modern reader will continue to be enthralled by this conflicted and unresolved epistolary self.

## Appendices

**Appendix 1:** Singer Sargent John. *Gassed*. 1919. Imperial War Museum.

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/23722>.



**Appendix 2:** Apollinaire, 'Le Palais du tonnerre', in '11 octobre 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, pp. 278-281.

Par l'issue ouverte sur le boyau dans la craie  
En regardant la paroi adverse qui semble en nougat  
On voit à gauche et à droite fuir l'humide couloir désert  
Qui servent à l'attacher sous les caissons  
Un rat s'avance en hâte et se recule en hâte  
Et le boyau s'en va couronné de craie semée de branches  
Comme un fantôme creux qui met du vide où il passe blanchâtre  
Et là-haut le toit est bleu et couvre bien le regard fermé par quelques lignes droites  
Mais en deçà de l'issue c'est le palais bien nouveau et qui paraît ancien  
Le plafond est fait de traverses de chemin de fer  
Entre lesquelles il y a des morceaux de craie et des touffes d'aiguilles de sapin  
Et de temps en temps des morceaux de craie tombent comme des morceaux de vieillesse  
À côté de l'issue que ferme un tissu lâche qui sert généralement aux emballages  
Il y a un trou qui sert d'âtre et ce qui y brûle est un feu semblable à l'âme  
Tant il tourbillonne et tant il est vrai inséparable de ce qu'il dévore et fugitif  
Les fils de fer se tendent partout servant de sommiers supportant des planches  
Ils forment aussi des crochets et l'on y suspend mille choses  
Comme on fait à la mémoire  
Des musettes bleues des casques bleus des cravates bleues des vareuses bleues  
Morceaux de ciel tissus des souvenirs les plus purs

Et il stagne parfois de vagues nuages de craie  
 Sur la planche des fusées détonateurs joyaux dorés à tête émaillée  
 Noirs blancs rouges  
 Funambules qui attendent leur tour de monter sur les fils de fer  
 Qui font un ornement mince et élégant à cette demeure souterraine  
 Ornée de six lits placés en fer à cheval  
 Six lits couverts de riches manteaux bleus  
 Sur le palais il y a un haut tumulus de craie  
 Et des plaques de tôle ondulée qui sont le fleuve figé de ce domaine idéal  
 Sans eau car ici il ne coule que le feu jailli de la mélinite  
 Le parc aux fleurs de fulminate jaillit des troncs penchés  
 Tas de cloches aux doux sons des douilles rutilantes  
 Sapins élégants et petits comme en un paysage japonais  
 Le palais s'éclaire parfois d'une flamme aussi petite qu'une souris  
 Ô palais minuscule comme si on te regardait par le gros bout d'une lunette  
 Petit palais où tout s'assourdit  
 Petit palais où tout est neuf, rien rien d'ancien  
 Et où tout est précieux où tout le monde est vêtu comme un roi  
 Ma selle est dans un coin à cheval sur une caisse  
 Un journal du jour traîne par terre  
 Et tout y paraît vieux cependant  
 Si bien qu'on comprend que l'amour de l'antique  
 Le goût de l'antiquaille  
 Soit venu aux hommes dès le temps des cavernes  
 Tout y était si précieux et si neuf  
 Tout y est si précieux et si neuf  
 Qu'une chose plus ancienne ou qui a déjà servi apparaît  
     Plus précieuse  
 Que ce qu'on a sous la main  
 Dans ce palais souterrain creusé dans la craie si blanche et si neuve  
 Et deux marches neuves elles n'ont pas deux semaines  
 Sont si vieilles dans ce palais qui semble antique sans imiter l'antique  
 Qu'on voit que ce qu'il y a de plus simple de plus neuf est ce qui est  
     Le plus près de ce que l'on appelle la beauté antique  
 Et ce qui est surchargé d'ornements  
 Ce qui a des ornements qui ne sont pas nécessaires  
 A besoin de vieillir pour avoir la beauté qu'on appelle antique  
 Et qui est la noblesse la force, l'ardeur, l'âme, l'usure  
 De ce qui est neuf et qui sert  
 Surtout si cela est simple simple  
 Aussi simple que le petit palais du tonnerre

**Appendix 3:** Léger, Fernand. *Les Fumeurs*. 1911. The Guggenheim.  
<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/2434>.



**Appendix 4:** 'Fumées', scanned by author from: Apollinaire, 'Fumées', *Calligrammes*, p. 96.

FUMÉES

Et tandis que la guerre  
 Ensanglante la terre  
 Je hausse les odeurs  
 Près des couleurs-saveurs

5 Et je fu  
       m  
       e  
       du  
       ta  
       bac  
       de  
       ZoNE

Des fleurs à ras du sol regardent par bouffées  
 Les boucles des odeurs par tes mains décoiffées  
 Mais je connais aussi les grottes parfumées  
 Où gravite l'azur unique des fumées  
 10 Où plus doux que la nuit et plus pur que le jour  
 Tu t'étends comme un dieu fatigué par l'amour  
       Tu fascines les flammes  
       Elles rampent à tes pieds  
       Ces nonchalantes femmes  
 15 Tes feuilles de papier



**Appendix 5:** Apollinaire, 'Madeleine', in '28 mai 1915', *Lettres à Madeleine*, pp. 55-56.

C'est quelque chose de si ténu de si lointain que d'y penser on arrive à le trop matérialiser  
Forme limitée par la mer bleue par la rumeur d'un train en marche par l'odeur des  
eucalyptus des mimosas et des pins maritimes  
Mais le contact et la saveur  
Et cette petite voyageuse alerte inclina brusquement la tête sur le quai de la gare à  
Marseille et s'en alla  
Sans savoir  
Que son souvenir planerait sur un petit bois de la Champagne où un soldat s'efforce devant  
le feu d'un bivouac d'évoquer  
Madeleine de la fumée d'écorce de bouleau qui sent l'encens minéen  
Tandis que les volutes bleuâtres qui montent d'un cigare écrivent le plus tendre des  
noms Madeleine  
Mais les nœuds de couleuvres en se dénouant écrivent aussi le nom émouvant  
Madeleine, dont chaque lettre se love en belle anglaise  
Et le soldat n'ose point achever le jeu de mots bilingue que ne manque point de susciter  
cette calligraphie sylvestre et vernale.

**Appendix 6:** Apollinaire, 'Merveille de la guerre', *Calligrammes*, pp. 157-158.

Que c'est beau ces fusées qui illuminent la nuit  
Elles montent sur leur propre cime et se penchent pour regarder  
Ce sont des dames qui dansent avec leurs regards pour yeux bras etcœurs

J'ai reconnu ton sourire et ta vivacité

C'est aussi l'apothéose quotidienne de toutes mes Bérénices dont les chevelures sont  
devenues des comètes  
Ces danseuses surdorées appartiennent à tous les temps et à toutes les races  
Elles accouchent brusquement d'enfants qui n'ont que le temps de mourir

Comme c'est beau toutes ces fusées  
Mais ce serait bien plus beau s'il y en avait plus encore  
S'il y en avait des millions qui auraient un sens complet et relatif comme les lettres d'un  
livre  
Pourtant c'est aussi beau que si la vie même sortait des mourants

Mais ce serait plus beau encore s'il y en avait plus encore  
Cependant je les regarde comme une beauté qui s'offre et s'évanouit aussitôt  
Il me semble assister à un grand festin éclairé a giorno  
C'est un banquet que s'offre la terre

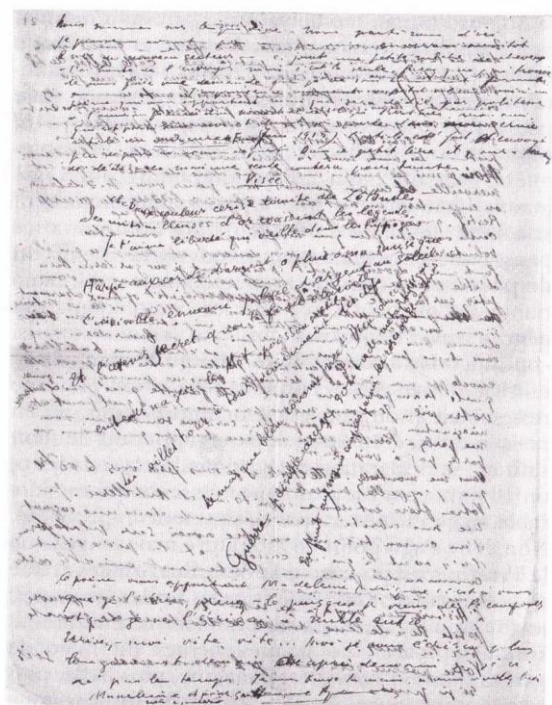
Elle a faim et ouvre de longues bouches pâles  
La terre a faim et voici son festin de Balthasar cannibale  
Qui aurait dit qu'on pût être à ce point anthropophage  
Et qu'il fallût tant de feu pour rôtir le corps humain  
C'est pourquoi l'air a un petit goût empyreumatique qui n'est ma foi pas désagréable  
Mais le festin serait plus beau encore si le ciel y mangeait avec la terre  
Il n'avale que les âmes  
Ce qui est une façon de ne pas se nourrir  
Et se contente de jongler avec des feux versicolores

Mais j'ai coulé dans la douceur de cette guerre avec toute ma compagnie au long des  
longs boyaux  
Quelques cris de flamme annoncent sans cesse ma présence  
J'ai creusé le lit où je coule en me ramifiant en mille petits fleuves qui vont partout  
Je suis dans la tranchée de première ligne et cependant je suis partout ou plutôt je  
commence à être partout  
C'est moi qui commence cette chose des siècles à venir  
Ce sera plus long à réaliser que non la fable d'Icare volant

Je lègue à l'avenir l'histoire de Guillaume Apollinaire  
Qui fut à la guerre et sut être partout  
Dans les villes heureuses de l'arrière  
Dans tout le reste de l'univers  
Dans ceux qui meurent en piétinant dans le barbelé  
Dans les femmes dans les canons dans les chevaux  
Au zénith au nadir aux 4 points cardinaux  
Et dans l'unique ardeur de cette veillée d'armes

Et ce serait sans doute bien plus beau  
Si je pouvais supposer que toutes ces choses dans lesquelles je suis partout  
Pouvaient m'occuper aussi  
Mais dans ce sens il n'y a rien de fait  
Car si je suis partout à cette heure il n'y a cependant que moi qui suis en moi

**Appendix 7:** 'Visée', scanned by author from Apollinaire, *Lettres à Madeleine*, p. 65.



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